Xanadu

An Expansion to the Nibiru Roleplaying Game

Xanadu

Was brought to life by the following humans

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The last dictation ever to be recorded in Ashur was accompanied by the dimming of the southern lights, with the city draped under leathery hues, of cinnamon and tawny, and the haze of burnt incense still caressing the vault's roof plaques. A sea of iqnû and azure fungi, sown at the feet of Our Shepherd almost thirty lapses ago, now withered along with the fleeting cycle—their dying light barely grazing the Progenitor's skin.

Riding along the fields, beyond the shadow of the ruined Ziggurat, Daniyel approached the congregation. There stood Eliyah and Ishaia, and Hanuno at the front holding a tablet covered in carvings up high. The session, now nearing its end, was longer than usual; two lapses went by, and the Shepherd's writing—which had turned slower with the passing of the cycles—required a contingent of Aliltu carrying tablets back and forth from the warehouse to the hill. Always, the same order went; one tablet, one character, lined in long stanzas recorded once per cycle, all made up the bulk of the Shepherd's teachings. Yet this lapse, everyone was expectant for the prophetic verse..

As the Shepherd lifted their finger, Hanuno turned to the congregation, raising the tablet high for all to see. The sound of scribbling swept through the hill, and Daniyel themselves leaned towards the nearest scribe to take a look at the nascent verse.

It read:

All was silent on the hill. One would have suspected the winds running amidst the congregation occluded all but the sound of beating hearts. Yet Daniyel knew everyone's thoughts—felt them, louder than ever before. They spoke of awe and despair, but most of all, of loneliness. A feeling distant, yet very, very close - soon to known to all.

It came with the deep rumble of synthetic breath.

The hissing of steel sinews as they tensed up.

The silhouette, now looking above all, took a final glance at the Ochre City, and began its journey to a land of dreams.

Prelude to Xanadu

When the showering light floods my eyes,
and the world's rumble shakes me from my sleep.
When rust's assault overtakes my limbs,
and Kabadu silences my screams.

Tear the paleweed at the seams,
Breathe the scents of way-back-when.
Wrap yourself in skin and flesh;
sinews woven into draperies.

Walk the hidden paths beneath,
To this sacred patch untainted,
Where the roots of my nostalgia,
Bear the fruits of my unmaking.

Seekers' Plight

The search for home is one of Nibiru's paramount stories. Nested deep within the Vagabonds imaginarium, it is the yearning for a promised land they've never been to, an afterlife where persecution and violence all become as distant as their long lost past. It entails a constant struggle against not just outside forces, but also the feeling that, no matter where they are and the intimate moments they share, something will always feel out of place.

The book you hold in your hands is centred around this struggle, set against the backdrop of Antumbra's grandiose city-states. It follows the footsteps of two human groups and their relationship with the concept of "home". One of these groups, the Vagabonds, you're already familiar with. The other, well, let's introduce you to them...

The Departed were natives to the vault of Ashur who, when given the chance, decided to walk back and seek for their absent Mother—the People's Shepherd. Deep within the entrails of Nibiru, they found a shard of their progenitor—the Womb—, wherein they built their primordial abode, far from the trials and tribulations of the Antumbran city-states.

Suffice to say, this orphaned realm could not exist undiscovered for long. Their encounter with the Arku heralds change, and as the Departed ponder on how to face this existential threat, the worst among the Arku seek to frame them as a living relic–a fragment of the past, the history of which can be reinterpreted to suit narratives of "sacred inheritance" and "primordial humanity". How will it all play out in the end? Only you can tell.

The inhabitants of the orphaned realm share a lot with the Vagabonds. Both are deeply tied to wishes of tranquil existence, trying to hang onto fading memories, all while facing persecution at the hands of powerful actors. Both sought for a place to call home, and faced the hardships that come with said search. And in these times of turmoil, their stories might instil strength in one another, as they fight for a not-too-uncommon cause.

Xanadu is thus divided into four chapters:

Chapter I: New Roots goes into length about the Vagabonds' quest for a home in Antumbra: what they need to get there, the many threats they face, the people who stand to help them as well as to out them, and how to weave the city's many faces into your stories.

Chapter II: Domed Paradise is a deep dive into the lives of people in Antumbra. This is a great read for players and Narrators alike, delving into everyday life in Nibiru's city-states, as well as their politics, religion, and socio-cultural aspects—with a special focus on the city of Nineveh. Also, it showcases some of the fauna and flora of the Outback Domains, thought more than anything, it serves to set a stage for the themes we've introduced before.

Chapter III: The Orphaned Realm introduces the realm of the Departed in all its glory; its denizens, history and way of life—, as well as those who are now knocking at their doors, their motivations and plans. It also features a short set of scenes by which to kick off and adventure, to introduce players to the realm of Xanadu.

Chapter IV: Keepers of the Origin presents a host of new Revelations, along with a section on the Vagabonds of the Womb, and the mechanics of Collective Memos.

A Closer Look

*The **Nibiru Corebook** is the essential tool to play Nibiru, but given the sheer scale and depth of the Skyless World, we owe it to everyone to take a closer, more detailed look at life in the station, its landscapes and its people. This makes **Xanadu** an excellent tool to form a deeper connection with the setting, and to help you and your group immerse into the Skyless World!*

Faces of Antumbra

Antumbra might be a tranquil, privileged place to live in for most, but the light that shines above the Arku projects a shadow over the lives of Vagabonds. Existence in the city is two-faced; making it easier for those born and raised there, while isolating and draining the life of those deemed as outsiders.

For the Vagabonds, this can be a painful experience. In the city, they find themselves surrounded by realities they can only dream of inhabiting. Blissfully unaware, the Arku pace around while amnesiacs struggle with alienation and the challenges of eking out a life at the world's heartlands.

For Antumbran Vagabonds, more than anywhere else, hell is other people. The spreading of rumours, the breaking down of trusting relationships, the changing political landscape—these are all bound to endanger them, inviting all kinds of fearful ideations, and pushing them to constantly think like their oppressors, lest they fail to predict how they'll react to Vagabonds sharing their space.

The stories you tell are interwoven by social interaction: a timeline of negotiations and the breaking down of, of blooming love and seething hatred, of trust and betrayal and the ways other people can make or break life.

During the best times, Vagabonds can catch a glimpse of the city as a **Domed Paradise**. This mood reflects how the group, seeing their objectives slowly coming to fruition, push ever closer to their ideal of life in Antumbra.

During the worst times though, they see themselves facing the **Monstrous City.** These are the times when Vagabonds see constant reminders of how they'll never be truly welcome. It is then when they find themselves on the run, pulling favours here and there, trying to escape the sight of their persecutors while struggling to protect everything they've built.

The key to a good Antumbran story is the constant balance of these two states, and the constant weighing of ideas of gains and losses tied to the decision to move there. The group tackles one issue at a time, and right when they thought everything was going swimmingly, a new enemy makes an entrance, a new threat makes itself known, and with more and more to lose as the story progresses, the stakes grow ever higher.

Dream of Xanadu

Xanadu, in this book, is more than just a concrete place: its a newfound land where the Arku project their dreams and ambitions. For the Vagabonds, it can signify a fresh start, where memories and a unique interpretation of them can make the idea of "home" into a reality.

Like them player characters, the Vagabond community has an imagined identity of its own. And in the same vein, from the tiniest speck of life in far Umbra, to the ancient city-states of Antumbra, the memories shared by human groups help sculpt these identities. For the uprooted Vagabonds, this community and the traits it seeks to embody are are quintessential to the idea of "feeling at home". Slang and catchphrases, prayers and rituals, obscure philosophies and charms, all of them flourish within the Vagabonds' inner circle as they explore the skyless world and build their own mythology.

If the *Nibiru Corebook* presented mechanics that aimed to build your character's persona, *Xanadu* is dedicated to the collective—to prompt world building based on the group's aspirations and their communal identity.

Ninevite Ways

*Xanadu's narrative of the city-state and its many faces is based on cities like Ashur, which is already featured in the **Nibiru Corebook**. Because of that, we've chosen to focus on the less conventional settlement of Nineveh. If none of these places seem like a right fit for your game, check out the list of cities on page 28 of the Nibiru Corebook: all of them make for a great backdrop for Antumbran stories!*

The Departed

Brand new to our writings on the Skyless World is this, the centrepiece of Xanadu; the Departed and their Orphaned Realm. They present us not just with a chance to explore the Outback Domains and the spaces between Penumbra and Antumbra, but also with new glimpses into the ancient past of Nibiru.

At the dawn of history, Assyrian tales speak of the Shepherd, how it guided the Arku to settle in the vaults of Ashur, and how civilisation thrived. Yet not much is known about the Shepherd's departure, its immediate aftermath, and about the rift that opened up in the Assyrian community, and the severing that followed.

This new society was made up of those unable to part ways with their guiding star. Maybe it was the fear of loneliness. Maybe it was their suspicion of the rest of society, and their reluctance to abide by the lessons the Shepherd gave to them. Unaware of just how deep into the entrails of the world they would go, their search would take them far from the hallways of Antumbra, into massive power line entanglements, delving into the freezing embrace of cooling facilities, and beyond the cacophony of roaring engines—to find a lost path, drenched in the memories of humanity's lost origin. A path back into the Womb.

Neotenic State

Looming over about two square kilometres of verdant floor plaques within a class B vault, the Womb is a massive synthetic organ, functioning without the need of a host body. By the time of the Departed's arrival into the vault, this superstructure had not only survived but grown to latch onto the vault's contact points—those which would have otherwise provided power for a nascent settlement.

To the Departed, this finding signalled that the Shepherd was aware of their coming. Their progenitor left a piece of themselves behind, aiming to provide them with the warmth and company they desperately sought for. This heartfelt belief found confirmation as the Womb opened itself for the Departed, with organelles and passages bursting forth—an organic citadel spreading with every pulse of the Womb's beating heart.

Named Xanadu, the city infused feelings of awe, cultivating exceptionalism into the Departed. They saw themselves as the faithful children, now awarded with an idyllic new home. Like Ashur's bosom, the vault and its overgrowth were warm throughout the cycle with cooler temperatures flooding in at close of lapse, aiding sleep. The blood of the city watered crops and, somewhere past the skin and bone, an inscrutable consciousness made sure to cared for the Departed.

Granted, it took some time for them to truly grow accustomed to life in the Womb. Scribes took on the task of mapping every crevice, pressing steel plates with detailed carvings, tattooing strange working cycles of the superstructure on its surface. Fascinating revelations came to light about how the Womb's organic process reacted to the presence of its tenants. Ever the meticulous researchers, scholars among the Departed realised that the Womb could assert control over the most subtle of variables—controlling vault humidity and even the colour balance on roof lights to ensure healthy living.

At the same time, the Departed learned to communicate with the Womb, shaping its growth in order to better serve the strange settlement now nesting within. They read and interpreted even the most subtle nervous impulses running beneath its skin, as well as the strange shadows moving past fleshy layers covering the innermost organelles. With time, a new social order grew organically, modelled after this interwoven, symbiotic relationship, which would shape the peoples of the Orphaned Realm and its hallowed residence for generations to come.

Storytelling Lessons
Whisperers Once Again

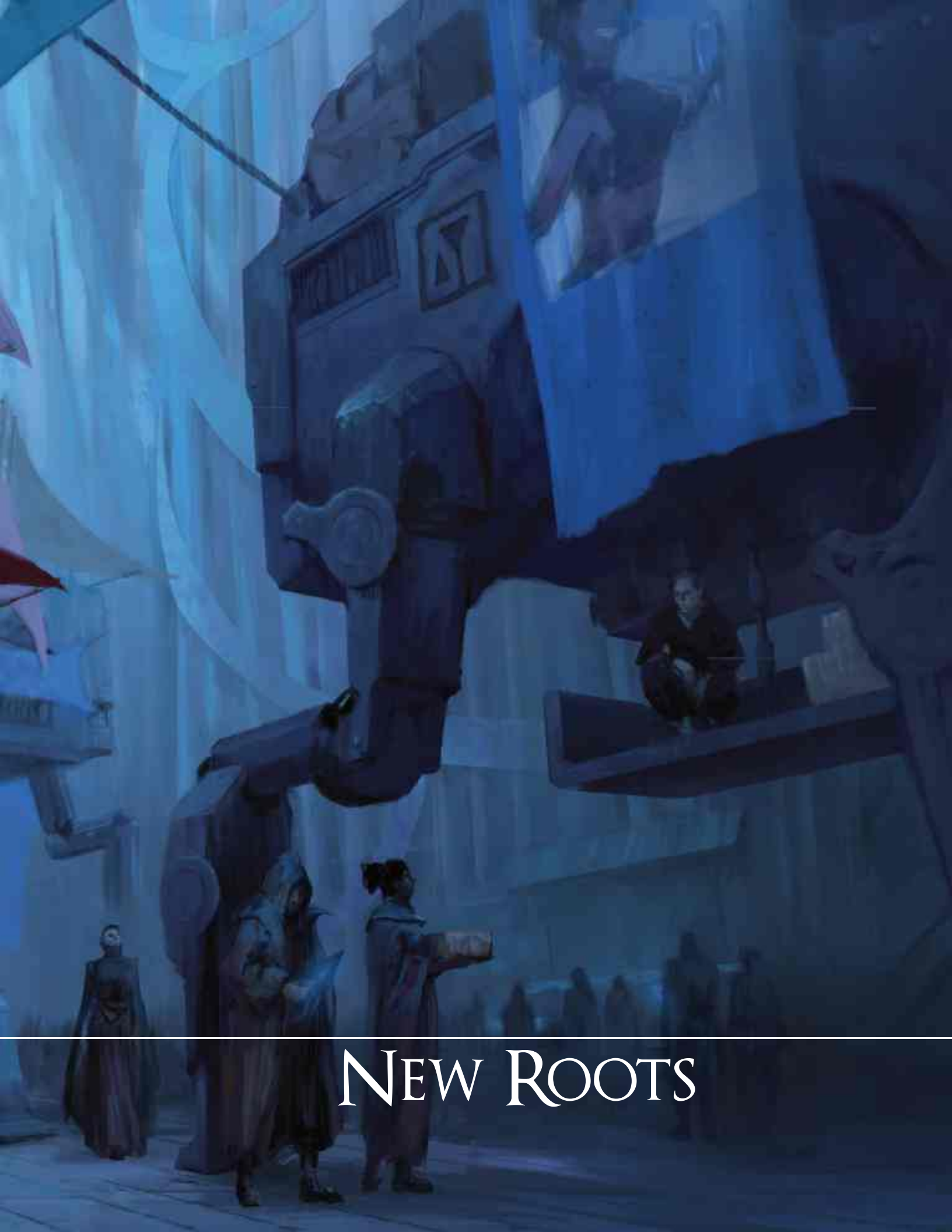
In the Age of Whispers, Vagabonds of renown cemented their reputation across the nascent states of Antumbra—their identity held up as a virtuous ideal by the Arku. Of course, the truth was much more complex: Whisperers often wielded their power in ways that caused plenty of suffering and loss, with time falling into obscurity.

Today, Vagabonds that manage to project their ideals and worldviews onto the societies of Nibiru can be counted with the fingers of one hand. Most of them have indeed unearthed the hidden legacy of the Whisperers, learning many a lesson along the way.

It begs questioning then, if such is the fate of the protagonists, what would their ideal society be based upon? Which traits would it enshrine, and which would they seek to banish? Can they avoid the pitfalls of utopianism and come up with truly democratic, communal evocations of social order? And what are the memories that will cement, through myth and legend, their identity and self expression?

These are the questions that we aim to tackle in Xanadu, hopefully empowering your group to change the world through their unique experiences.

Chapter 1



New Roots

The Ebb & Flow

It's not the Ascendant's body trembling, nor the station's bowels that shake. It's their eyes and lips, it's the mind unnerved, rattling at the thought of what they'll find beyond the gates, knowing that for a few minutes their whole destiny is at the hands of a stranger draped in Archaean robes.

All too common to the Vagabond state of mind is an uncertainty that leaks into every judgement, factoring into every decision and life path they follow. This uncertainty isn't just what keeps them constantly on the move; it's the motor pushing their stories forward—blooming anxiety creeping at the turn of every corner. It is the shadow of uncertainty, the feeling that tells them that their lives are nothing but castles in the sky.

This is not to say that the other peoples of Nibiru don't see uncertainty in their daily lives. It means that most Arku live within a rather safe bubble, shielded by entities both concrete and abstract. A citizen tag, a contribution history, a standardised dialect and set of customs. A feeling of belonging roots them, softening the impact of the unexpected. The Vagabonds do not have this, and might never have had it.

This chapter explores the lives of Vagabonds in Antumbra as they fight to find a place to call their own. In a pseudo-chronological order, it follows the steps many an amnesiac take to seek refuge in the Core Sectors. It is meant to help you build engaging stories within the city-state, centering the player characters as immigrants to the Arku homeland, their perilous journey and their struggle to find a welcoming home.

Towards the Light

No one sets off to Antumbra on a whim—especially Vagabonds. Most of them do not have the time to ponder and choose about the wheres and the hows—the answer is always; anywhere else, as soon as possible. This is why so many of these journeys start with a tumble, quickly turning into a landslide of mishaps and fail-forwards. Worse still; schemers, aware of the amnesiac's plight, are constantly on the lookout for ways to profit from them.

The Undone

A particularly cruel subset of the Silu community in Penumbra has devised a predatory scheme, promoting a "fast track to Arku citizenship". These Silu often recruit cheap Penumbraic labour via proxies, and then register them as caretakers for Arku minors doing short tours of Penumbra. This allows the contracted Enēšu to escort these kids back into the Core Sectors without a citizen tag, which invariably leaves them unprotected from indentured servitude. The Undone, as they are known in Enēšu revolutionary circles, usually see not just their promised citizen tag but also their credit tag and work history taken from them, their lives essentially held for hostage.

There are only a few pathways for Vagabonds to travel into Antumbra, which vary wildly on time, risk, and especially the skill set that they will demand. Depending on the material conditions the group finds themselves in, they may get little choice in how they'll embark on their journey Core-wards. These are...

Silent as they Come

Even in the most perilous corners of far Umbra, one can find solace in the thought that the darkened tunnels were once meant for people like you and me. Unfortunately, this is not the case for the Outback Domains—the steel bowels that pulse, stirring beneath the houses of the Arku. Few Vagabonds give any second thoughts to spelunking; getting under the skin of Nibiru presents unknowable challenges; no amount of preparation can get you ready for whats out there.

At the start, groups tend to converge upon a staging point, such as the immediacies of Shepherds Glory, the Samar, Sienna or Ebbub. Local pathfinders might be able to help through the first few lapses of journey, yet around the 1.4G line, even state-charted cadastral maps blank. The hallways one would normally follow into Antumbra's main arteries start to deviate into places unknown, and Vagabonds slip through the crevices, falling into the dark spaces in between.

In these parts, keeping a steady course is, more often than not, the biggest challenge. Traversing the bowels of Nibiru means relying on unconventional methods to stay on track. Some choose to stay within perceptible distance of Ascendant tunnels, knowing not to stray far from the roar of them furious contraptions and the vibrations echoing through Nibiru's steel bones. Others choose to follow distinct terrain features; auxiliary power lines that run from Ur and Zuccabar, to as far a place as Lumia or even Kirkuk. Losing your way might mean reaching sealed tunnels, where oxygen is nonexistent, or wandering into forbidden facilities and forgotten pathways.

The makeup of the Outback Domains is as varied as it gets. What does it mean, then, to walk these parts? The next page features a few examples...

Tale-Sparks

- *Across outposts and hamlets found near Myrna, a branch of the Waywatcher Consortium looks for volunteers to survey and chart the immediacies of the 1.4G line—particularly to find any serviceable tunnels for transit. Partaking in this could mean acquiring valuable information on alternative routes into Antumbra.*

- *Sienna's council authorities are reporting on strange phenomena close to the Samarian Tollgate—whispered to be the rumbling of a hidden Ascendant. The group might set out to look for this, only to find a beached Serpent of Azure. If the group manages to tend to its wounds, the animal will lead them to the edges of Antumbra.*

***...spelunking** is highly dependent on the resources the group has at hand and their experience traversing the wild side of Nibiru. Vagabonds with the right set of skills might go on long trips across the largely unexplored, uncharted tunnel systems of near Penumbra, only to delve into the obscure bowels of the station. This is dangerous because of obvious reasons, which is why the groups that opt to migrate in this way are generally made up of individuals that feel much more suited to survive the wild of Nibiru, rather than dealing with Arku border control and the intricacies of Antumbran frontier management. And, honestly, who can blame them?*

***...barge travelling** has lots of advantages, being less strictly regulated than Ascendant travel. Also, the fact that barges stop at several trade ports along their journey gives amnesiacs a shot at picking where to disembark, which helps them surf the capricious demeanour of customs authorities. With that said, it's much harder to find someone willing to haul migrants on a barge than on an ascendant. Barge crews are mostly formed by Enēšu, which are more likely to be prosecuted by Antumbran authorities if their "human cargo" is found out. While on those cases, Arku at the helm of barges would get away with a slap on the wrist, they also are likely to harbour a host of prejudices that could turn deadly for vagabonds on the path.*

***...ascending** might be the fastest way into Antumbra, but it's far from the most straightforward. It requires from the vagabonds a lot of planning: It puts their lives entirely in the hands of the Arku, both those at the helm of the ascendant as well as those waiting for them at the landing pad. Vagabonds need to have the way cleared beforehand, with reliable contacts on the other side helping them bypass customs and find a safe place to stay at the heart of Antumbra. Above all else, trust is the biggest foil of migratory ascents. Stories abound of organ traffickers that let flow more than the recommended krajj dose during the ascent, scooping out comatose bodies upon arrival to harvest their crop. Certainly, a pleasant journey of a few hours that drops you at the centre of human civilisation had to have a few big downsides baked in.*

Wire Thickets *are found in key points across regions of Nibiru, where several power lines converge in order to feed into one or several power nodes. These are usually very hard to traverse, as cables clump up like bamboo shoots, forming a nigh-impenetrable wall that smaller creatures usually use for hiding. Provided that the group has wire cutters (and they don't mind risking the shutdown of nearby nodes), they can provide refuge as well as an opening to catch small prey.*

Fulgent Cloisters *announce themselves with the thunderous banging of automatic hammers, the ardent heat of the steelweave press and the roaring engines of the assembly line. Cloisters enable the Skyless World to produce the compounds needed to maintain itself, yet they are extremely chaotic places for humans to tread into. Although most people know to stay away from them, scavengers and outliers have learned to lure prey into the cloisters, letting the infernal machines do the hard work for them and then picking the scraps.*

***Waterhalls** are facilities where water is filtered and recycled on its way back to Nibiru's natural reservoirs. Rotting flesh and pungent chemicals preface a series of flooded tunnels, leading into large acid pools where animal carcasses and filtered matter decompose. Wading through these nightmarish lakes requires a raft that can resist the substances found in the water, and a couple of strong arms to push through and evade the sewage vortexes found across the surface.*

***Alveoli** are found close to life support and supply lines, connected to airways and designed to filter most of the air flowing in from the Torus. Past the mechanical filters and wind turbines that dot the wind pipes, alveoli are teeming with life and greenery; an oasis amidst the cold of Nibiru's entrails. Most alveoli consist of small spherical vault clusters, each measuring a few dozen meters in diameter. Larger clusters have been found—sometimes with people inside, living high on oxygen and developing isolated micro-communities with distinct languages and customs.*

Barging In

Antumbran city states have learned, with time, that forging close ties with the largest enclaves in Penumbra is key to keeping the credit economy alive. One of the boldest moves they've taken on that front was the gifting of Arku-sponsored barge fleets to Torus-adjacent communities. As colonialism makes its advance, Vagabonds find new ways to sneak into the Core Sectors. One has to consider, however, the political ramifications that barge-hauling Vagabonds could pose for the brittle relations between Penumbra and Antumbra. Most of the time, travel arrangements are struck between one or two crew members and the Vagabonds' collective, behind the backs of the rest of the crew. Their options are thus limited by who their contact is, and of course, their port of arrival.

Most barges heading to **Tarsus** deal in bulk shipments of heavy machinery, making just a few resupply stops in the way and completing the trip in about five lapses. While this sounds good on paper, Vagabonds should know that Tarsus has some of the most secure shipping and handling procedures in Antumbra, with x-ray scanners and such making your "hiding in a container for the whole trip" plan outright suicidal.

Those opting to land at **Charchemish** better prepare for an unnerving trip: the Archaean city-state uses this route to supply its many colonies along the Penumbraic Torus, which means that if you hop on that barge early on, your chances of getting found during one of the multiple stopovers increase exponentially. Thankfully for Vagabonds, most barges will bear an Archaean manufacture tag and carry registered containers—which at least makes unloading procedures in Charchemish safe and straightforward.

Tale-Sparks

- *An engineer working at a barge stationed in Suruptu offers the Vagabonds a chance to sneak in, provided they can seize four tanks of ghost fungi that are in custody at a local warehouse. If they manage to do so, they'll be able to hitch a ride inside the container carrying the tanks—since arrangements to let it slip have already been made.*

- *A local activist group gets in touch with the player characters, seeking for aid in order to free a captured amnesiac that has been imprisoned in Lammat. One crew has offered themselves to take them there on the way to The Jewel. How will the Vagabonds adapt once they realize the barge crew has set them up to get captured by the Covenant?*

The newest route into Antumbra ends at the outpost located in **The Jewel**. Established to distribute medicine derivatives from ghost fungi, the route is mostly deregulated, barring the fact that one of the trip's seven lapses is spent docked onto Nergal—the wandering necropolis of Enki's Covenant. During this lapse, Lammat's produce is loaded onto the barge, whilst the crew generally spends time at the resting salons found across the necropolis.

The Climb

It's been long since Ascendants were thought of as the umbilical cord by which the cusp of the Skyless World nurtured them places below—specially considering that there's plenty of people thinking the opposite is true nowadays. Yet in the Vagabonds' memories, Ascendants were always recalled from afar—wondrous machines they'd never have the privilege to ride, given the immeasurable risk posed by entering Antumbra via the front door. However, with the advent of barge travel and the Torus becoming ever so populous, the demand for cargo space shifts away from these machines and into the ever growing barge fleets of Penumbra. City-states bend the knee to Silu conglomerates, which proceed to slice up the pie and distribute ownership of the Ascendants' cargo space between themselves.

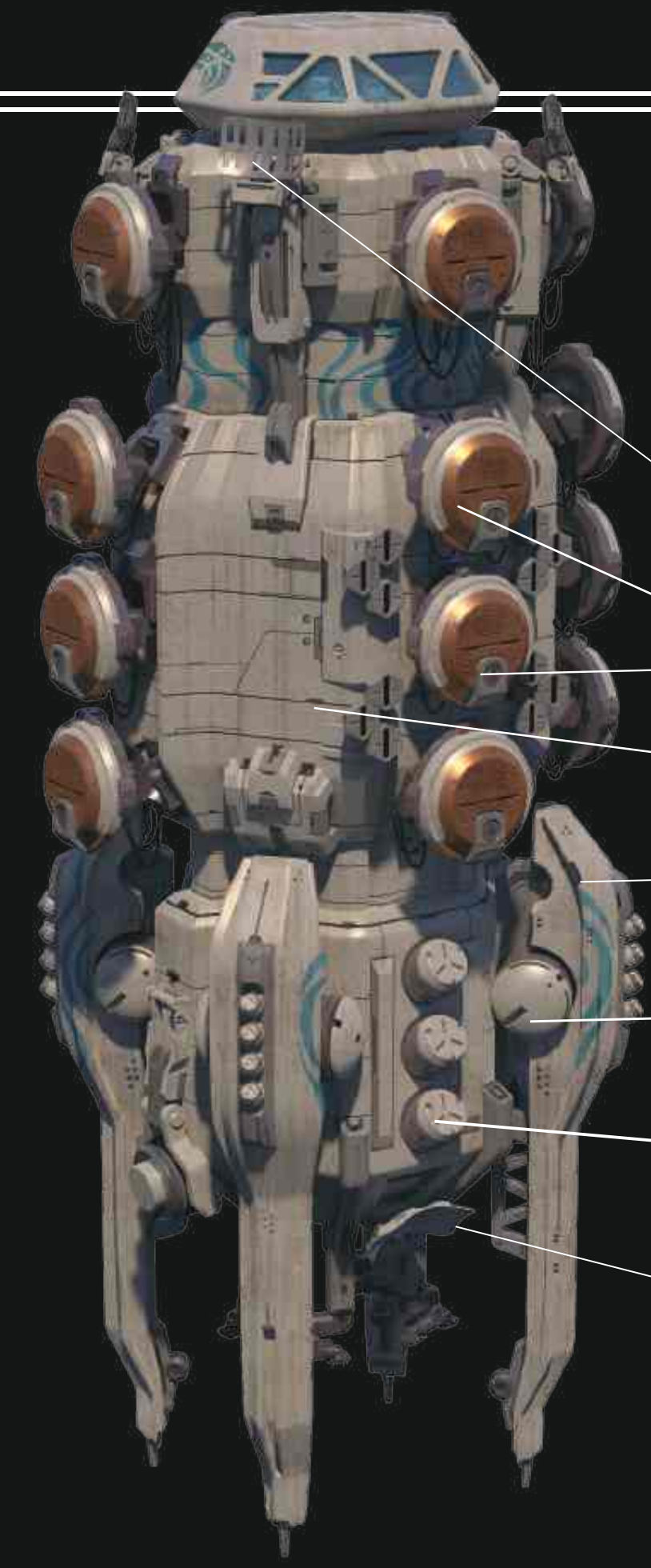
For Vagabonds, boarding an Ascendant might be the easiest bit of it all. The problem comes from the many people involved in the process, meaning that the group has to lay down the groundwork for determining what happens when boarding, during the trip, and upon arrival.

Below, the authorities in control of the Ascendant's landing pads tend to be major Silu factions. To find your way in, exchanging flavors with Enēšu working at the docks should do the trick.

During the trip, Ascendants tend to make one or two routine stops depending on the route. Cargo bay checks are common here, so staying hidden is key. If found out, Vagabonds have pretty much nowhere to run (unless they're looking for a near-death experience out the hatch door), and the crew is legally obliged to hand them in at one of the many checkpoints found along the way.

Above is where things get really tricky. Antumbran landing bays are compact bastions, host to small armies of border security personnel and the strictest control measures. Vagabonds either need powerful connections to bypass the checks, or an expertly crafted plan that gets them through, both of which are hard to conjure up if your base of operations is hundreds of miles below Antumbra.

Ascendant V



Charchemish entered the race for Penumbra's resources early in comparison with other larger, more powerful city states. Piercing through the veil of darkness, the Ascendant V was their knight in shining armour: a medium sized vessel meant to carry light machinery, foodstuffs, as well as up to thirteen passengers (three of them crew).

Myrna's immediacies—the ascendant's landing site—helped Charchemish secure a vast expanse of yet unexploited terrain. More than all other city-states, Archaean laws favouring the Silu's freedom of operation made the new settlements of Myrna into despair-filled outposts—their Enēšu counted among some of the most overworked labour forces in the whole of Penumbra.

Corewards Comms Relay

Enables communication with Antumbraic landing site.

Electromagnetic Stabilisers

Aid vessel stabilisation during the trip.

Loading Gate

Main cargo entry point.

Plug Arm

Plugs into launcher rail as well as charge points across ascendant tunnels to keep the vessel on the move.

Circular Capacitor Batteries

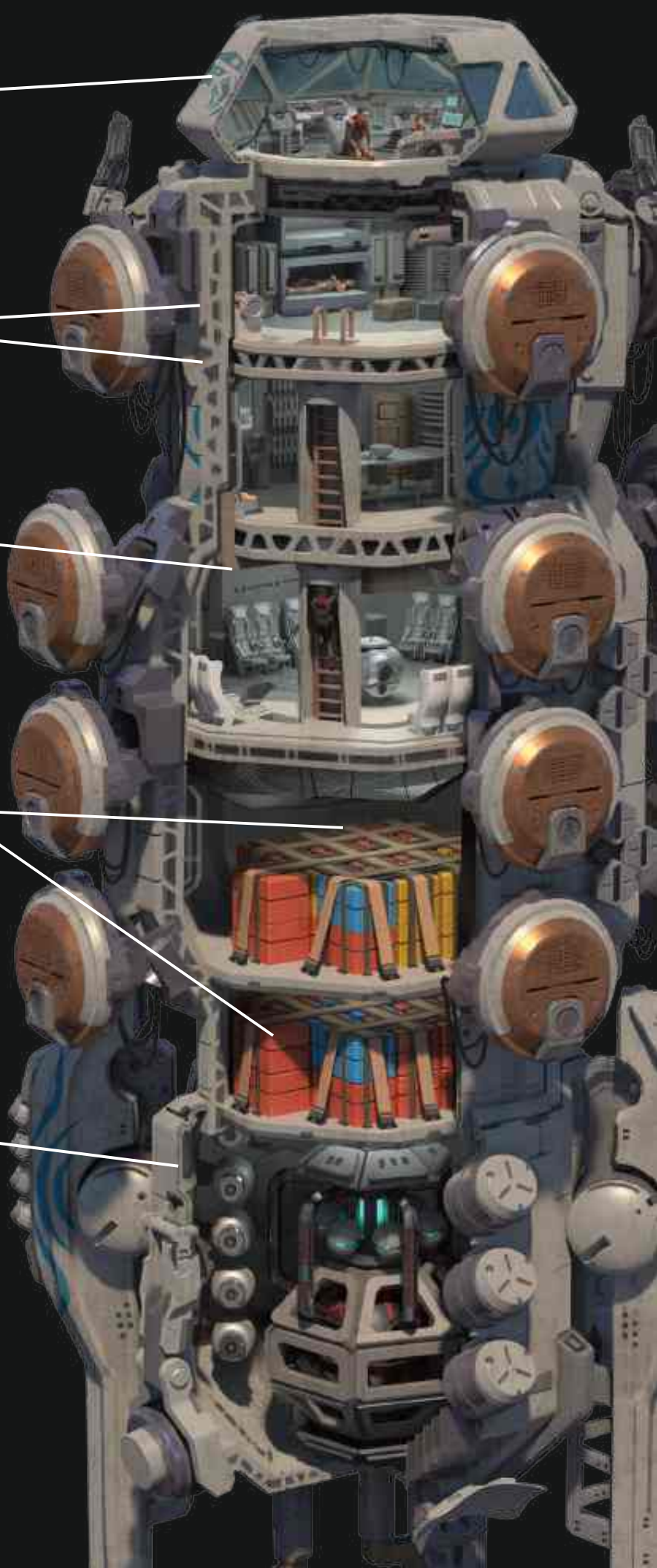
Receive charge from the charge points, powering the ascendant's climb, as well as generating power from descent.

Circular Capacitor Batteries

Receive charge from the charge points, powering the ascendant's climb, as well as generating power from descent.

Anti-Corewards Comms Relay

Enables communication with Penumbraic landing site.



Drivers' Rim

Located at the top of the ascendant, the drivers' rim is the main control node of the vessel, with one seat reserved for the communications' officer, and the other two for the machine's pilot and co-pilot. The rim has an entry hatch right above the crew quarters with a fingerprint lock, as well as an emergency hatch that can be used to evacuate the vessel directly from the rim.

Crew Quarters

Both of the segments found below the rim are dedicated to serve the crew, given that they tend to spend entire cycles aboard the ascendant. The hatch leading from the passenger's rim to the quarters has a fingerprint lock, to guarantee the crew's peace of mind.

Passengers' Rim

Offering up to ten passengers seats, this section of the ascendant is accessible by a small door to the side, and is locked out from most of the vessel by locked hatches. Cabin luggage can be stored via the floor access points, which give access to a small storage area in the main cargo hold—located at the roof. At the centre of the rim is the main krajj burner, meant to aid the passengers in adapting to the destination's artificial gravity.

Primary and Secondary Cargo Holds

Cargo areas in all Ascendats are subdivided to prevent containers from shifting around too much. Containers are color coded depending on the nature of their functions more than their contents: Red containers usually have normal padding and are meant to transport general goods, yellow containers have refrigeration functions and are used for the transport of foodstuffs and fungi, and blue containers have full on life support batteries, meant to transport livestock.

Engine Room

While most of the controls related to the engine can be accessed from the drivers' rim, the engine room does feature a direct link into the Ascendant's main functions. The engine room has a series of fail safe mechanisms to isolate the rest of the vessel in case of a dangerous malfunction—preventing an explosion from reaching the drivers' rim. It also has a service ladder that connects through a shaft with the crew quarters, so that the crew can access the engine room unnoticed in case maintenance is needed.

Antumbraic Landscapes

1. Main Haillway

Hallways of this size (roughly several dozen metres wide) represent most of the arteries found throughout Antumbra, though there are several which are way larger in size (couple hundred metres). In this example, we see a typical state border control, as well as fungal overgrowth farming.

2. Segments

These passageways connect hallways with parallel circuits and all kinds of service tunnels. While most hallway-adjacent segments are monitored by states, the sheer number of them found beyond Antumbrae's main arteries make them hard to map, let alone keep under watch.

3. Auxiliary Powerlines

Class A vaults are usually blessed with auxiliary circuits that can supply emergency power in case of widespread shutdowns. While the most powerful city states have managed to keep these powerlines in good shape, if one is to step outside of the hegemon, one would find these to be teeming with creatures and fungal growth.

4. Central Node

Lower in the hierarchy of central facilities, central nodes are short tunnel sections meant to monitor oxygen, water, and all manner of life support systems at a local level. While the amount of control these nodes grant over life support is quite limited, information by itself is valuable enough to keep these sections of the station under close watch.

5. Main Powerlines

The main supply lines for vaults are usually found either below the floor plaques of main hallways, or in dedicated tunnels close by. Most access points in Antumbra were flooded with molten metal pills, then sealed shut to prevent enemies from sabotaging power supply. The few remaining, usable access points are under close watch, preventing anyone from slipping in.

6. Sewage

Around 99.8% of all refuse in Nibiru gets reprocessed and reused to create basic components, thanks to a complex garbage disposal system. Unfortunately, sewage is known to be the first function to fail once you start to wander off from Antumbra—meaning that the peoples of beyond do need to come up with crafty solutions to the problem of garbage disposal on their own.

7. Central Facilities

Most of Nibiru's entrails are made of so called central facilities—entailing pretty much everything that works behind the curtains to keep the machine running.These facilities are vast, labyrinthine complexes—some reaching several kilometres in diameter, and comprising entire ecosystems adapted to the particular conditions one can find therein.

8. Secondary Hallways

Running parallel to main hallways, these tunnels are meant to bypass the main arteries in case they become blocked. These hallways are sinuous, shifting, rising, and splitting as they spiral around the main hallways in an unusual, organic-like manner. While most city-states do have patrols travelling secondary hallways, their nature makes them hard to keep under steady surveillance.

9. Ascendant Shafts

Vertical shafts repurposed for Ascendant travel, these tunnels are almost tailor-made for use in transportation between the regions of Nibiru—turning trips that could take cycles to be completed in a matter of hours. Capacitors dot the pathway, plugged to railings along the walls. These capacitors get charged thanks to the energy generated by descending vessels, which then use that sap that same energy to power ascent.

10. Service Shafts

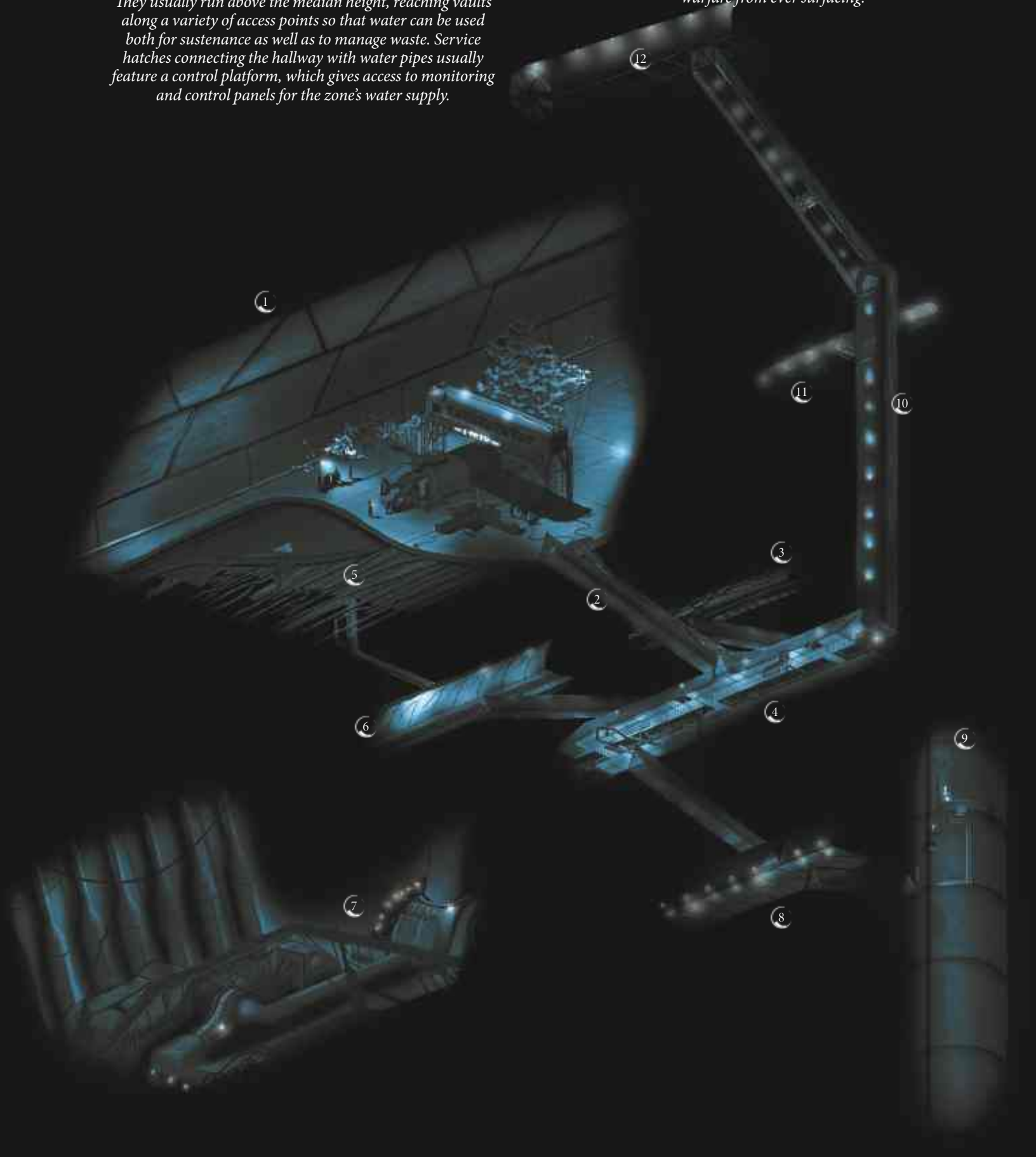
Because Nibiru uses artificial gravity to aid the circulation of life essentials, service shafts are a natural feature of the station's entrails—used to access the lower and upper levels of facilities found in the immediacies of main hallways.

11. Water Supply

These pipes are secured by some of the most complex safety mechanisms in the Skyless World, meant to prevent water contamination and any sort of tragedy to devolve from it. They usually run above the median height, reaching vaults along a variety of access points so that water can be used both for sustenance as well as to manage waste. Service hatches connecting the hallway with water pipes usually feature a control platform, which gives access to monitoring and control panels for the zone's water supply.

12. Air Vents

The highest point along hallway parallels, air vents are sealed away and sectioned regularly by filters and purifiers. Like water supply pipes, they are off-limits for most Arku, with post-war legislation quickly passed to avoid some of the most cruel, indiscriminate methods of warfare from ever surfacing.



Tale-Sparks

- *An Enēšu engineer seeks for the group's help in reaching out to her daughter in Antumbra, to inform her of her second mother's sudden passing. To get them there, she plans to trigger a timed shutdown of the Ascendant's engine, allowing the group to sneak in during a mid-trip maintenance stop. However, they'll first need to plant and time the disruption device in the vessel…*

- *A known benefactor to the Vagabonds is kidnapped by the Covenant. As large containers are seen loaded onto an Ascendant bound for Charchemish, the group ponders: Can they really risk an interrogation being carried out? What will they do in order to rescue the victim?*

Storytelling Lessons

Borders Are Violence

It is often those who need it the most that get the "Rejected" stamp from border authorities in Antumbra. The Enēšu have a word for it: *azula bulhaia*, or "voyager's dread", is a feeling of utter helplessness that stems from seeing your life, hopes and dreams at the mercy of a hostile system that, for all intents and purposes, regards you in an utterly inhumane manner. This is no different than the feelings so many people experience when in similar situations in real life, so do bear in mind that—while we want to acknowledge it—some folk at your table might find this a sensitive subject matter. Please, act responsibly.

In practical terms, Vagabonds arriving via barge or ascendant will experience this as they disembark—resulting in a **Stress Test (five dice) against Helplessness**. This is only partially over once they're past the border since, unless they have a secure place and their situation is more or less under control, this feeling is likely to linger on. The constant threat of being found, of existing somewhere they don't belong in, affects Vagabonds under vulnerable situations no matter how they arrived at Antumbra.

This lingering feel can be a running theme for many a campaign set in Antumbra—the inner struggle that comes with exile, and each character's examination of their reasons to leave, and how they balance different aspects of their life in relation to that. A non-player character in the same position can also help bring these themes up during play.

The Plugs I've Met

How do the group's odds stack when facing the imposing silhouettes of Antumbra's city states? Most certainly, their shared condition can't be the only thing bringing them together. Relying solely on this is one reason many Vagabond enclaves fail; there needs to be more than just fleeting memories binding them to one another. Often, it is their joint struggle and mutual trust that pushes them forward. In this way, the journey to Antumbra can serve as a great new story arc to delve into after a few cycles below the shadow of the Skyless World.

When the group makes their choice, they will mostly likely need someone they trust enough to help them kick the plan into full gear. It could be a logistics worker doing shifts at the ascendant's landing pad, or an Enēšu contact looking to grant them a chance in exchange for favours on the other side. In truth, in most cases their contact is likely to be a Silu operative—belonging to the most resourceful group in Penumbra, though the real cost of this sort of relationship will be seen later on in this chapter. Because of how Antumbran stories are so deeply tied to the bonds the player characters will establish with those outside their group, we'll go on to list a few characters you can use to open up paths into the Core domains.

*Draped in richly layered shades of purple and pink, **Saga** is a skilled artisan who—like many an Enēšu—has delved into the study of unconventional sources of energy. Their research has led them to study the power of tales and memories themselves, seeking out remnants of memotech (the strange technologies of Nibiru related to memory) and theorising on how energy can be sourced from nostalgia and associated imagery. Saga drapes themselves in the fruit of their research, donning hand-carved capacitors that hold power derived from recordings of tales and remembrances, ornamented with sigils reminiscent of said stories. Naturally, they've come to know many a wondrous tale about Nibiru,and are willing to share these with Vagabonds in exchange for some of their own memories.*

Riding atop an old bearded Ayyalu, and carrying with them the scent of milkweed and lemongrass, ***Qanaya*** *is native to the strange settlement of Kirkuk, an herbalist that roams Penumbra running errands for the village council. They are likely to run into the group during outings close to the eastern edge, the frontier beyond which the Outback Domains unfold. Qanaya will offer the protagonists a chance to join into an expedition towards the Antumbran bowels, helping guide the Vagabonds and travelling in a group for safety. At best, they will be witty, charming company. At their worst, they might seem inscrutable, unpredictable and unreliable.*

Khawa *knows the Torus like the palm of her hand, having served as Waywatcher for the council of Shepherds Glory, though now her cycles patrolling the windswept dark are long left behind. Now, she works for a group of Silu that bears no name, that holds no known allegiance to any city-state—for whom her discretion is her best asset. She meets the group while travelling the Torus, maybe aboard a barge, and takes an interest in their life history—she is, after all, inquisitive in the extreme. Her proposal is simple: she wishes to sneak a cargo hold full of hacked credswap machines into Antumbra. For this, she can facilitate any required piece of paperwork, as long as they can do the job. The question is; how desperate are you for heading up? And what is this whole ordeal about?*

With a pale face and entrancing eyes deep as the ocean's black, ***Goriel*** *is as ominous a presence as you would expect from any Enēšu that has outlived most of their peers. For a long time, they worked across the tunnels near the Samarian Tollgate, moving batteries north and south while earning credit from their distant Assyrian patrons. However, when the time came in to cash in on citizenship, Goriel decided to put their niece on the Ascendant V instead, in hopes of granting her a better life. Since then, they've moved into a life of solitude harvesting fungi along the Longlapse Way. At their best, they are wise and determined. At their worst, they project a deeply rooted nihilism onto the group, prone to losing hope and questioning their enterprise and its purpose.*

Betrayed by a collective of Silu from Tarsus, and wasting her lapses in a ran down detachment in Sienna, ***Oshana*** *is a most unlikely ally to the Vagabonds. Once a Covenant nexus, she eventually left to try her luck as an independent in the Umbraic frontier. She holds great resentment for the Silu and the many boundless organisations that vie for power in Penumbra, having decided to devote her last cycles to healing some of the wounds she inflicted on others. Oshana is likely to appear to save the group from her former colleagues, promising help if they're willing to accept her with all her baggage. At best, she's a figure wherein the Vagabonds can see redemption, and the final triumph of humanity. At her worst, she's an unnerving presence, whose existence might prove to be more of a risk to others than a force for good.*

Eternal Haunts

Vagabonds did not always exist in the margins of society. During the Age of Whispers, they were celebrated as prophets and visionaries, messiahs that came from afar to lead Antumbra towards a new tomorrow. That vision burned away, along with thousands in the pyres—their name shunned by tyrants and aristocrats, all for daring to put their power in check. The amnesiac kin would not make the same mistake again.

This legacy left behind scarred memories; their collective history only survived in fleeting dreams, while the only remaining whispers that can be heard across Nibiru are those preaching caution, advising not to raise your voice and to keep to yourself. At the same time, the few outsiders that know about Vagabonds have been quick to cash in on the rumours, using them to blackmail and coerce amnesiacs for a variety of purposes.

The Vagabonds' precarious condition nurtures a world of anxieties, which make it nigh impossible to find the quiet life they desperately seek for. Those who reach far generally find themselves in a state of heightened paranoia—constantly performing damage control, making it impossible to compete with their more carefree, confident Arku counterparts. Any moment of respite they take might make them vulnerable to those who seek to take control of their lives.

The Prey

There are plenty of reasons why some of the Skyless World's most iconic organisations would have an interest in the Vagabonds. Of course we can talk about the power of their hidden abilities, and the potential uses of their survival aptitudes, as well as their knowledge of human networks and communities lying beyond the grasp of the Antumbran city-states. But by far, the most enticing thing about them is their latent link to a far off past that is often used to justify the ancient structures of power that reign over Nibiru's societies.

This is, for the Skyless World's hierarchs, the definitive weapon of supremacy—the key to their claims, and to the destruction of their peers'. From knowing how X or Y feud really kicked off, to devising why a particular negotiation went awry, to backing the plight of this or that council master or overlord, as well as pushing one religious tradition above the other. Seizing of the amnesiacs means controlling the narrative, myths and legends that breathe legitimacy into the archaic structures of Antumbran power. Think about the potency that origin stories have over national identities in our world, even hundreds or thousands of years after the icons, personalities and records upon which they're based turn to dust.

One needs just a conduit to that past—the Vagabond—and the technological means to retrieve the stuff of legends from the depths of their subconscious. Once done, the powerful can rule over history: They decide whether to broadcast those stories, weave them into new forms, or erase them from the face of Nibiru with a quick, clean shot to the head.

Among the amnesiac's predators, the ones who own the tools of this bloody knowledge trade, and the ones most adept at wielding said knowledge, should already be known to you…

The story tells that the Eyeless Seeker was, essentially, born in a place so cold even time had stopped moving. It was only curiosity that could break the spell of such a place, that could push him to take a first step as long as a thousand flickers, releasing his body from the prison of neverwhere.

He was of open arms, and understood his skin to be clay, knowing that to meet light's embrace meant inviting its shadow to take residence on the skin. With each passing cycle, that which the shadow didn't touch found warmth, its teeth sinking in, sculpting the Skyless World's silhouette onto his. At close of lapse, his visage had already been engraved with the silhouette of steel pillars, Ziggurats, and the contour of vaults and reservoirs. And everywhere, all would stare onto his skin, wishing they could live there—a living picture of the past.

In their yearning, they turned their back on the light so giving, for all they'd ever need had been written on his visage. And the light, ever jealous of its creation, consumed itself—preferring to leave all in darkness, rather than to spend another moment occluded, unnoticed.

The Covenant

Societies turned inwards will often give birth to seemingly unstoppable, boundless rebels. Enki was such a person, a seeker from their most tender age, who left the domains of the Supremacy early on, finding their way into hallowed places—where shape and sound were unlike anywhere in the known world. Enki always wanted to see what was beyond, and though they never really uncovered any grand revelations about the Skyless World, their ideology and story remained well after their death—a yearning for learning what was out there, and an inspiration for those who would succeed them.

Unfortunately, curiosity and knowledge of this kind alone does not necessarily beget kindness. If anything, the Covenant—the organisation Enki founded in their old age—became increasingly more detached from humanity, preferring to always turn their eyes towards the dark. Enki's descendants looked to escape the known world, anxious to reject the rigid tenets of the societies they were born into, and desperate to remake the world on their own terms.

The Age of Discovery presented the Covenant with the opportunity they were looking for. Suddenly, the knowledge they collected throughout generations was sought after by every organisation involved in the expansionist game. The Covenant faced a divide in their ranks, yet in the end those who were up for selling the secrets they had stashed away won the day.

Currently, the Covenant still retains that outsider spirit, yet the advent of the credit society and their status as colossal information traders and judicators has made them all the more cruel and unscrupulous—ultimately turning into a terrifying organisation focused on owning and manipulating humanity's knowledge sources.

After The Fall

When the Age of Supremacy came to a close, martial conflict was replaced by legal warfare, as hundreds of miles of Antumbran territory stood contested in terms of rights of exploitation and habitation. The insular city-states, unable to come into agreement on an international code of law that would settle thousands upon thousands of claims, fell right into the hands of the Covenant: one of the only inter-state organisations, which had a wealth of historic records that could be used as invaluable evidence to guide the courts in solving the land ownership crisis. The Covenant thus became the key participant in post-war negotiations: A series of protracted legal battles that saw the organisation adapting in real time, seizing more and more powers as time moved on. As the dust settled, Enki's Covenant had transformed into the prime institution for mediating inter-state conflicts—completely changing the philosophy by which it originally sought for knowledge.

Memorial Scavengers

Enki's Covenant works as a vast network, feeding information from the outskirts to central outposts. Though the general public knows they operate across several locales, the true reach and size of the organisation is kept in secret, with only the Archons—Enki's ruling council members—being fully aware of the extent of their influence, which operates at different levels...

The grand bastions of the Covenant are located in Ashur's Redfields district, in the black vault of Eridu in Antumbra, and aboard the wandering necropolis of Nergal. These are the Covenant's seats of power, wherein large scale operations are coordinated, and where most of their collected knowledge is kept.

Covenant outposts are found in almost all major cities and settlements, always with an Archon in charge and several operatives, responsible for handling smaller scale operations. These outposts generally serve as a link between local populations and the Covenant, and depending on their relationship, some communities might find themselves more in debt to the Covenant than to their local council. Being aware of this relationship is, of course, of great importance to Vagabonds.

Nexi stand as sole representatives of the Covenant in the far off corners of the Skyless World, as well as in locales wherein outposts are deemed inconvenient—either for lack of opportunities or for the need to operate undisturbed. Their lack of Covenant-owned infrastructure shouldn't be underestimated; Nexi are chosen and sent to their posts for good reasons, with most of them being extremely sharp and resourceful individuals, usually wielding enough influence to mobilise local authorities in order to achieve their goals.

Memotech: Vagabond's Bane

Although you might already be drawing some parallels between the Covenant's ambitions to learn of what's beyond, and the Vagabond's memories as windows to different worlds, the missing piece of the puzzle came along with the invention of Memotech—a collection of horrifying, invasive creations that would soon become the amnesiacs' worst nightmare.

Memotech was born off of a revolutionary discovery—a technology that allowed scientists to decode and observe the very stuff memories are made of. While the first instances of Memotech were simple aids for memory, such as drugs that could bring memories to the surface through lucid dreams, the organisation's transformation after the end of the Surpremacy changed that. As the Covenant turned into de-facto holders of burden of proof for inter-state law, pressure mounted to get more accurate, faster results. The need to urgently fill-in the gaps in their testimonial resources, to provide express veredict on legal claims, meant exploring a far more aggressive, invasive, and effective technology—meant to extract memories rather than letting them flow.

Finding a Vagabond with links to the right time and place was like finding a legal goldmine. As time passed, amnesiacs became more and more valuable for their memorial store. Seizing on one and their recollections was so profitable, the Covenant would usually seek to bank on a capture Vagabond by sending Nexi to the locales the memories referenced, looking for lost lineages and disgruntled loners who might take on the chance to raising stakes on old family grudges.

Making History

Memotech has managed to open up history to the Covenant in ways unimaginable to most, yet the wisest of Vagabonds might be right in thinking that "the worst is yet to come". After all, Enki has been pushing hard for the development of new technologies that could allow them to manufacture artificial memories down to the detail, as well as the means to mass distribute them—which would make them privy to an arsenal of tools that could work as a wish granting machine. They already know of the potential of Revelations—which motivates them to seize that potential themselves.

The next pages feature several examples of Memotech and their terrifying functions.

Quickscour Revolver

Although (most) of Enki's Nexi aren't allowed to carry weapons, the Quickscour Revolver is not classified as such and, falling under the ever-growing mantle of Memotech, it makes these the essential handgun of the Covenant's inquisitors. Its design is an amalgam of many of the technologies developed by Enki during its long history—all compressed into a small, portable and reliable package.

Quickscour revolvers work in different configurations, their functionality resembling a mish-mash of some of the tools found in this section. These are single-shot, disposable guns, which trigger the effects of the Mk3 "Floodgate" grenade upon impact, and can then activate any of the presets found in the Thoughtcarver entry.

The revolver has an effective range of ten metres (since the stake has to connect via a cable to the revolver's handle), and becomes useless after being shot once. Longer reach variants exist, but the ten metre one (the Harpooner) is the most common, of which Nexi tend to carry several with them (generally four).

Slipstream Transmitter

Implanting a transmitter is considered among the most important items on the checklist when bringing in a new subject into a Covenant facility. Once set up, these transmit an encoded audio signal, known only to the Covenant, which helps them track escaped Vagabonds. Through the noise one can barely hear, if paying close attention, the amnesiac's inner monologue and thought stream.

Slipstream transmitters are one of the main foils for escaping Vagabonds. These are bound to keep the group on the run, seeking frantically for someone who can remove it—a painful process, requiring a qualified surgeon to perform.

There are, however, side effects that generally vary depending on the Vagabond's habitat when it comes to the Slipstream Transmitter. Once per lapse, the subject may make a **Special Roll (one die)**. If successful, they can choose to quiet down their thought stream and, instead of that, transmit something of their choice, related to their Habitat. Maybe it's something they remember hearing in the BrightTown Radio, machine-language rumblings, the musings of the Leviathan, or the unnerving breathing of a Nightmare. Whatever it is, it's up to you!

Surfacer

An oldie but goodie. The first types of Covenant Memotech were focused on pushing Vagabonds to remember without a particular focus in mind. The same old drawbacks remain—namely, the risk of quicksilver poisoning given the components found within the capsules.

These capsules (which are quite big in comparison with your standard Earth-made pills) are meant to push the Vagabond to remember quicker. Taking a Surfacer means that your next action roll will trigger a Memory, which can be bought with a single MP discount. After ingesting it, the subject makes a **Contested Roll** against a single die. If they fail, they go down their Body track as if it were a normal combat or violence roll (their body effectively fighting the toxins found within the pill).

Swallowing more than one pill increases the MP discount, one by one, yet in the same manner they increase the dice pool against which you'll test to resist the toxins.

Headsettler

An experimental piece of Memotech, the HS series was created at the dawn of the Age of Discovery—when the Covenant had the resources to invest dozens of cycles on a myriad of pet projects. This one was meant to push the Vagabonds' mind to force Revelations to surface.

These machines quickly populate the Vagabonds' consciousness with a random assortment of memories. The goal is to fill up space: if there's not enough material "below", the Headsettler AI will recycle old memories to create new ones, imitating the unconscious, creative processes of nostalgia. These don't need to make sense—the point is to overload the mind to force a Revelation.

Once the spinal plug is in place, make a **Special Roll (one die)** to determine how many Memories you'll need to write—these will have neither bonus nor penalty. If you cannot write more than a certain number of memories (due to Habitat-imposed limitations, for example), stop writing. Any entries left in the Journal Page will be written by the Narrator, who can only use words found within the current page, until the Journal Page is filled.

Because of the bizarre nature of this memory collage, the Vagabond's mind runs the risk of being affected negatively. Once the Journal Page is filled, the Vagabond must roll a **Stress Test Against the Unknown** (the opposing number of dice is equal to the number of artificial Memories generated by the Narrator).

Mnemosyncryx MK2 "Caustic Ideation"

The most recent developments in Enki's research on Vagabonds' brain chemistry seem to have found a chemical compound that's tied to their memorisation capabilities—one could say, the literal "stuff of memories". Among many experimental drugs developed, Mark 2 of the one known as Mnemosyncryx had particularly good trials, yet its addictive nature resulted in the formula being stolen—the produce, soon rampaging across Vagabond communities.

Mnemosyncryx Mk2 was never meant to leave the Covenant's labs. In its current form, its ingestion produces an excruciating feeling of nostalgia, which is especially potent in Vagabonds—as well as highly addictive.

After ingesting an Mk2 tablet, choose a memory in your current Journal Page. With a pair of scissors, your hands, or anything you can procure, cut out that Memory and its Effect from the page. Then, earn Memory Points equal to the number of Memories adjacent (next to, above, and below) to the carved out Memory. When filling the next Journal Page, whichever Memory can be seen through the hole counts as the one occupying the empty space.

Every lapse after the first one, failing to ingest a tablet will result in a **Contested Test (against one die)**. This will take you down the Body track as per any violence roll. Every passing lapse, the dice rolled against will increase until the opposing pool becomes a five die pool. On the sixth lapse, the effects of addiction will pass.

MK3 "Floodgate" type grenade

Floodgate grenades are used by Nexi during raids in order to incapacitate Vagabonds. In essence, they're a "media bomb", meant to cause a colossal sensory overload by emitting loud noises, projected imagery, etc.—all of which are tailor-made to have a particularly strong effect on amnesiacs. A literal blast from the past!

Floodgate grenades are the more "immediate" offshoot of Headsettlers, though in this case utilised specifically to seize amnesiacs rather than for research purposes. When the grenade is thrown, everyone within a 10 meter radius needs to make a **Stress Test Against Violence**. The number of dice they are testing against is determined by the number of empty entries in their current Journal Page.

Failing means you will fall to the floor unconscious rather than going down the Mind track. Likewise, being successful only means the Vagabond resists the grenade's effects. Consciousness is regained several hours later.

Thoughtcarver

One of the oldest designs in Enki's arsenal, the latest models of the Thoughtcarver still work mostly through the olfactory system, yet possess much more refined exploratory presets. Nexi can use these to track not just specific past experiences, but also to source the most readily available recallings and bring them to consciousness as fast as possible.

Thoughtcarvers are drilled to the Vagabond's nose bridge—their installation still involving a painful process that opens a new channel into the subject's olfactory system. From then on, the user can control it's function via a MAT's wireless connection.

When first installed, or when a new Journal Page is unlocked while installed, the user must choose one of two presets. If choosing the Romping Preset, make a **Special Roll (one die)** for each empty memory remaining in your current Journal Page. The number resulting will set the numeric value that the memory's bonus will possess, essentially "mapping" the Vagabond's next batch of recollections (remember that negative -3 memories are not possible). Upon using those entries, the player will need to trigger memories with that exact value, whether negative or positive. If 4s are rolled in any of the Special Rolls, nothing happens. After this, the subject earns 1 MP per each roll made. Memories that spring from the All 4s, All 1s rule need not conform to this limitation.

If choosing the Focused Preset, you may immediately generate a Memory for whichever value you wish, spending or acquiring MPs as normal (though given that there's no roll, there will be no success or failure tied to it). You are free to choose whichever Action Type you want for it. After all is done, go down one Body step.

Tale-Sparks

- *A Mnemosyncryx addiction epidemic is affecting a large section of the Torus immediacies, even after several local leaders have actively pushed to raise awareness among Vagabond communities. A Covenant Nexi might be behind it, as most of those suffering from it are being taken a while after lapsing into addiction. Can the group follow the trail of victims to get to the culprit?*

Multiple Vagabonds report having been attacked by a Service AI, which carried a Headsettler with it. The artificial memories, however, seem to be coming together into a particular pattern. What is the AI trying to say, and why is it using the Vagabond's memories to convey its message?

Enki's Message

The Covenant as an organisation is almost tailor-made to make most Arku shy away from it. It isn't a government backed organisation (meaning working for it doesn't count towards your work allotment), and it mainly deals with things beyond the border. It's also perceived as not being reputable enough for talent to drift to, employing people who are generally painted as social outcasts, casting an image of being, plainly, a bad place to work at. This is an expertly manufactured image for sure. Most Arku kids participate in a Covenant camp during their education cycles yet, ask anyone about it, and it's likely they won't remember anything at all. How disastrous would it be, to linger in people's collective consciousness for too long! Enki wouldn't have that.

Most of the Covenant's PR efforts are focused around painting this image, while elevating that of its business partners—such as specific branches of government, particular individuals or, in recent history, a host of Silu conglomerates. They mostly choose to operate through intermediaries, who borrow services and tech licenses from them in exchange for carrying out a variety of operations across the Skyless World.

One of the Covenant's largest efforts on PR has to do with managing public perception of Silu conglomerates operating in Penumbra. Enki tends to, on the one hand, shift the blame—with popular uprisings always attributed to "cultural responses to the region's dangerous nature", or on the "ambitions of separatist overlords". On the other hand, conglomerates themselves are not exactly painted as overly righteous—projecting "measured benevolence" is the name of the game, baking in a certain degree of ineptitude, yet ultimately framed as benevolent—and most importantly, always in need of more government aid to help the region's development.

Arupa's Thought of the Lapse

Most Vagabonds in Longlapse Way know of the now defunct alternative Network known as "Arupa's Thought of the Lapse". This Network, which ran for about ten cycles before mysteriously vanishing, was special in that it was based on a Vagabond's thoughts—transmitted through a retro-engineered Slipstream Transmitter. The Network was focused on making public broadcasts of the names and locations of key operatives of the local Covenant Nexus, and though some think that Arupa's fate turned out quite grim, those most close to her have claimed she's still out there, making her way into Antumbra, planning on iterating and expanding on her original idea.

The Dreams of Sard Eil

Political divide within Antumbran societies often comes from clashing interpretations of the past—and the Covenant, and their rift between Traditionalists and Pragmatists, is no exception. The first believe that the organisation's focus should be the exploration of Umbra and beyond, arguing that this was Enki's lifelong dream. Pragmatists, on the other hand, believe that Enki was always trying to find validation, and a way to return to society, to make their talents praise-worthy and to contribute to humanity. It's the second view that eventually won out, yet as the engines of the colonisation complex start to slow down, the question of the founder's true calling has risen again.

It was Sard Eil—a botanist and librarian based off of the city of Ur—who broke through the noise and campaigned to search for the literal memories and ideas of Enki themselves, a proposal that made her very popular among Traditionalists. Based on this, the Nergal Project was born—culminating in the construction of the wandering necropolis, which would serve to study the lingering memories, thoughts and dreams of those who passed away. The public-facing role of Nergal would, at the same time, appease and motivate Pragmatists—with the barge serving as harvesting and distribution platform for the newly discovered fungi known as Paleweed.

Needless to say, Sard Eil's ability to find consensus between both tendencies within the Covenant was nothing short of outstanding—to the point where many wonder now if the entire organisation will eventually fall under her control. In the meantime, she oversees the search for Enki's body while refining the methods developed within Nergal's black carapace. Whatever her rise augurs, for Vagabonds everywhere and society in general, remains to be seen.

Tale-Sparks

- *The group accidentally falls within a strange facility while traveling through a secondary hallway. Within, they find a series of strange slabs and a tomb which seems to be the final resting place of Enki. What will they do with this discovery?*
- *Eshai, a traditionalist nexus, seeks to put an end to the persecution of Vagabonds across the Longlapse Way. An encoded message from them is left for the group to discover—it seems Eshai wants to make contact, and attached to the message are a series of blueprints and internal documents with the locations and names of all imprisoned Vagabonds in Charchemish. How will the group proceed?*

Hiding Places

Arriving at Antumbra is only the beginning of problems for Vagabonds. The large majority of them will do so with no access to Arku citizenship status, and thus they'll find themselves outside of the city registry—unable to secure their livelihoods, and ultimately pushed to the fringes of society, remaining tied to overlords old and new.

The fact of the matter is that the same powerful Silu that enabled them to sneak into Antumbra are usually the ones who continue to hold the reins after the Vagabonds' ascent. Whether it be Enēšu immigrants, refugees from the Outback Domains, or the Vagabonds themselves, existing outside of the city-state's good sights means relying on statal credits—and those who happen to own the most. The particular subset of Silu that operate between Penumbra and Antumbra are a cadre of human traffickers with long-term plans to push the credit economy into Antumbra, and as such will mobilise their debt peons to advance their goals.

From locating escaped workers and bringing them back to "justice", to installing unregistered CredSwap machines, from taking out activist leaders, to helping sneak in "human cargo" containers—, the sort of tasks Silu might request from Vagabonds signify a dreadful existence of servitude, which threatens every bit of their human integrity. How will they escape this loop? What sort of alliances might they form in order to break free? And is there truly a way to escape Antumbra's institutional violence?

Here's a list of potential tasks a Silu conglomerate might ask from Vagabonds living in Antumbra—the sort of jobs your group might find themselves performing to ensure their continued existence under the Core's warmth...

Tale-Sparks

- *Goriel is a well-known Našparu of the Arts, and a staunch opponent to the Silu conglomerate the Vagabonds work for. A group of Enēšu makes a proposal: if the Vagabonds interfere with an upcoming arts festival while declaring their link to the Silu, Goriel will push for the conglomerate's dissolution. How will they pull it off? Will they be able to avoid retribution after the incident?*

- *The Vagabonds are tasked by their Silu overseer to deliver a blueprint to an operative in the Outback Domains. It contains plans for a high speed rail, running cargo from the edge of Penumbra to the Domains. How is this information revealed to them, and what will they do with this knowledge in hand?*

Contraband of unlicensed CredSwap stations is one of the most important avenues through which Silu conglomerates operate in Antumbra. These contraptions (akin to vending machines) serve to cash in and exchange credits held on one's tag. They're everywhere in Penumbra, but due to obvious reasons are not supposed to be a thing in Antumbra. Seeing CredSwap stations here means that credits start to carry value into the sacred house of the Arku, and thus those who own the market—the Silu—take another step into humanity's cradle.

Setting up jamming perimeters is an old trick that comes from the Rusthunter profession, whereby a series of beacons can be set up across an area to confound automatons—particularly patrol automatons and camera

drones—in preparation for a certain operation or meeting. These are usually carried out when Silu operatives need to meet face to face with connections in Antumbra (which is quite often, given that local Networks are highly monitored).

Organising political manifestations is a classic way of putting debt peons to work during less tumultuous periods. Silu conglomerates are always pushing for X or Y agenda to pass via the city councils, always looking to gain more privileges and rights. When it comes to campaigning, debt peons are very often employed in a myriad of different ways, such as serving as messengers to particular council members, as promoters in the streets, and even to dissuade political adversaries.

Running cargo is generally the sort of thing peons with an earned reputation would be entrusted to do—particularly given that they're supposed to be in charge of their masters' human investments. This means, essentially, pushing the buttons on their human trafficking network, serving aboard a barge or even getting a post at customs to make sure the right container gets through.

Human Jettison

One of the reasons why Silu conglomerates can operate in such a ways lies in the progressive erosion of Penumbraic worker rights. The status of 'independent contractor' is often cited whenever any allegation surfaces against the Silu—shielding themselves in the fact that, given the extension and difficulties of operating in Penumbra, they have no true way of monitoring how the workforce procures credits. Under that premise, it's easy to see why any case related to Silu interference in Antumbra ends up with the deportation of one or several debt peons—along with the confiscation of their assets.

Of course, Vagabonds don't necessarily have to be working for the Silu directly to survive in Antumbra—yet the most likely thing is that they'll operate under their rules, still tied to the credit system, and reliant on these illicit credit exchange networks established in the seediest parts of town. Every lapse will still be a struggle for survival, yet this will happen in a place whereby stepping out into the light for too long or stopping at the wrong checkpoint will get them captured and sent back to Penumbra.

As they venture into the city, they'll find that the safest zones for them are those people would generally avoid, descending into the entrails below the vaults' surfaces, where the eyes of the council rarely venture any looks.

Box-Sized Heaven

Any place where normal people would live in the city is generally off limits to anyone without a citizen tag and a residence permit. At the same time, even new arrivals from Penumbra have designated living quarters they access before transitioning to fully equipped living units. The same reliance on Silu contacts can be seen here: these conglomerates usually manage the logistic depots and warehousing units utilised for colonisation and Penumbraic operations. What the Silu generally do is to tag some of these containers and set up their interior to serve as "housing" for the Vagabonds. They surely charge a rental credit fee—how else would the wheel keep turning?

These modules have the bare minimum necessary for habitation, and because they're often stored in far off deposits close to the base of the vault, they usually get extremely hot during the initial lapses of each cycle—when heat exhausts work to regulate the sudden electric bursts coming from the Core. Furthermore, warehouse personnel generally has access to the interior of these units, many of whom take advantage of this by asking Vagabonds for a security fee, arguing that they are partly responsible for what happens to the containers.

Given what we've been describing so far, it should be obvious now that this alternative system in which Vagabonds find themselves exists in an enclosed environment itself, designed to keep the amnesiacs as direct dependants and servitors of the Silu. There are, however, a couple of ways Vagabonds have escaped these sort of places (aside from the obvious ones, like seeking for refuge in a church or for the hospitality of strangers):

Unallocated Housing Units: These have the obvious disadvantage that state patrols may conduct routine checks on housing blocks—them being the obvious place "undocumented" would flock to. Though housing units are generally best considered temporary solutions to the housing problem, a handful of Vagabonds have been known to make contacts with bureaucrats in the resource allocation ministries, who can choose to leave a particular set of units unallocated for as long as they want, while also tagging those units in such a way that patrols would avoid them—like putting "under repairs" stickers on them and the such, which also can help justify the use of services like water and electricity in the units.

Vault Overgrowth: Outside the steel carapace of most vaults, you can often find spaces (and even, sometimes, entire facilities) with no clear purpose, often grafted or protruding from the outer layer of the vault's life support systems as well as its adjacent hallways and power lines. These vestigial constructs of the station are believed to be a byproduct of Nibiru's creation process.

Whatever it reveals about the station's nature, it's often the case that the city-state finds little use for these spaces (especially the more atrofied, reduced sections). Vagabonds can settle in these, though they'll have to work a sweat in order to, say, divert power or plug themselves to the water network. Those that manage to do so can, however, live their entire lives in these places without ever being found out.

Dead Containers: The newest alternative to come into the fold, and certainly a sign of desperate times, dead containers are repurposed containers that have been fitted in Penumbra to not only give a fake signal when going through scanners, but also to be plugged into pretty much anything in order to sustain the life support systems within. These containers are, unlike those used by the Silu, overseen by small Penumbraic cooperatives that make sure the container itself is always moving from one place to the other within the city-state—essentially acting like a package that's always circulating. This ambulatory lifestyle helps keep the people living inside safe, though the preparations do require Vagabonds to pay a steep price before launch.

Waste Management Facilities: You read that right. Today's waste management facilities across Antumbra are almost completely automated, making it easy for Vagabonds to sneak in—specially for those who can speak the language of machines. While some groups have managed to reprogram and monitor entire compounds to keep themselves out of harm's way and far from prying eyes, some others have also met their doom due to minor slip ups, getting tagged as garbage and therefore "discarded" accordingly. Overall, it's an option, yes... if you feel confident about the challenge.

Interlayer: In the most populous vaults of Antumbra, the space below ground consists of several levels, each layering districts on top of the next one, subdividing life for the Arku to make the best use of limited space. The spaces in between these layers are crammed with all the infrastructure needed to service these layers—rewired powerlines and secondary sewage pipes, as well as multiple maintenance access points and human-engineered vents. The interlayers are quite inhospitable places to be in, and usually only serve to lay low for a couple of lapses at most, yet they do offer quick access from one level to the next—making them ideal hiding places if one is on the run.

Churches: The Pilgrim's holy houses of worship are, in most city-states, protected by law similar to that which reigns over interstate territories. Vagabonds can seek for refuge within, which is hardly ever denied, and offer their services in order to remain under the institution's care for a while. Granted, if your persecutors have enough of a good reason to take you, they will eventually negotiate with the Pilgrims or get you while you're out and about, but for some who might do a good job minding their own business, a couple of cycles of service and devotion might bear fruit in the long run—opening up opportunities not just to remain in the city, but to travel across Antumbra.

Amnesiac Refugia: Across a few detachments and small population centers in Antumbra, inquisitive minds might find pockets of Vagabond subsistence—where closed-in communities, having learned of the persecution sustained by the amnesiac kin, closed ranks in order to provide safe haven. These communities are often found near the Crescent, and in tiny dependencies removed from the centrail hallways of Antumbra. Many a city-state has dependencies located near fuel repositories and capacitor sites, locales that see pretty much zero Covenant oversight and where Vagabonds with connections can live undisturbed. As long as everyone does their part when state envoys arrive every couple cycles, these close-knit circles of trust can thrive for long periods of time.

Tale-Sparks

- *An Ummânu working as a logistics coordinator of a particular district of the city has heard the plight of a friend, who is trying to secure a safe haven for Vagabonds. The group is asked if they can sneak into a logistics management facility, hack into a terminal, and cancel the dispatch of a set of 30 old containers—which the Ummânu promises will be cordoned off in the depths of a warehouse, left free to repurpose as a safe hideout complex.*

- *As a convoy bound to meet with the Pilgrimage sets out to leave the city, a hiding Enēšu by the name of Awila takes advantage of the group's visit to the church, where she's been hiding. She asks for the group to safely escort her to the convoy, letting them know that she is being sought after for sabotaging Enki's dealings in Penumbra. Can the group reach out to the convoy, and find out if someone is willing to hide Awila? What will it take to get there?*

Endgame

So far we've talked about the many ways in which Vagabonds make their way to Antumbra, the people and organisations that play a part in their journey, and the many ways by which they'll struggle for survival. But what happens when the group finds their footing? How will they harness their newfound position, and how will the whole experience—from living below to securing a life above—affect their goals endgame?

If Vagabonds are to stand at the cusp of civilisation, it's key to think about how your story will develop past the initial arcs we mapped throughout the chapter. Here are three ways by which you can do that, based on the group's worldview, along with Tale Sparks to prompt them…

Insiders

Another way the group might face their new life in Antumbra is to become a beacon of light for those who, like they once did, aim to escape Penumbra—establishing a support network in order to make the Arku homeland a more welcoming place for amnesiacs everywhere.

If their journey and establishment in Antumbra worked as a first arc, this next arc is about how the experience has changed them—convinced them that it's their mandate to help others have a better shot at doing what they did themselves. To leave a path open for newcomer Vagabonds, as well as others seeking refuge. For this, they'll be working to set and cover up for entire operations meant to establish the foundations of their network. The dangers are higher (since the group is trying to create, foster, and safekeep an entire community), as well as the stakes (since it's not just the Vagabonds' lives, but the lives of those that will fall under their wing that are on the line).

There are many ways to do this. They might try to influence the decisions of particular council members, uproot the power of the Silu in the city, strike a pact with the Pilgrims to provide refuge, or even try to build a base from where they can coordinate actions deep throughout the station. Play is likely to involve paranoia and a lot of caution, since the group will need to make sure there is no paper trail of any kind leading their operation back to their own homes. They are bound to have more tools to achieve success, but you as a Narrator might need to think of how much more severe the penalties for failure might be—and how the ripple effect of, for example, some piece of information slipping will cascade and come back to endanger the group's lives and mission.

Tale-Sparks

- *Word reaches the group of a Vagabond who has been entrusted with the command of one of Suruptu's newest barges. Such an ally would be invaluable for the establishment of a safe route between the umbras. Their cooperation, however, can't be taken for granted. What kind of relic will he ask for in return?*

- *The Citizen's Fair will soon arrive, where the Aliltu can try many different kinds of Ummânu jobs and vice versa. With the guildhalls open to the public, the group has a chance to infiltrate Silu offices to delete all debt records, and recover any stolen citizen tags. How will they do this, and who should they watch out for?*

Climbers

Some groups decide that, regardless (or even because) of what they've gone through, it is their right—no, their obligation—to cash out on their newfound privilege, standing above the rest of their ilk and carving out a life in Antumbra as close as they originally wanted it to be. This idea, and the power-high it brings forth, can only last if they manage to ignore the lessons of their past.

They might seize a citizenship tag, try to become Silu themselves, or attempt to settle down and live normal lives. They might even try to join the Covenant or any organisation where they think they have a shot at amassing power. Obviously, ascent brings its own set of problems.

On the one hand, depending on how high they want to go, there's a consciousness toll to pay—eventually they'll become conscious of their power, and how a single drop of it might have meant the world to them in past times. This is likely to materialise when people that were integral to the Vagabonds' rise come back to them, asking for assistance. Whether they help or not, things are bound to change: either they snap out and get involved, or they'll see consequences. Denying help may even call for a **Stress Test (three dice) Against Violence**, given the inherently violent exercise of power they might be exercising.

On the other hand, their past will surely bite them personally—regardless of how high they get. Think about scandals toppling powerful individuals in our world, with a sudden reveal of a past event impacting them, especially if it signals Enki the truth about the Vagabonds' nature. At this point, it's a good idea to discuss with the group what kind of direction they want the story to take: do they wanna push for power play to rise to the highest echelons of society, or do they think telling the story of their fall and eventual redemption is a better option? Talk it out!

Tale-Sparks

- *A motion for Enēšu representation in the city council passes, and the group receives news of Silu crackdowns on anyone wishing to step up to the role. The group is asked to help design a plan to retaliate. What is the best way, and will their reputation come through unscathed?*

- *The group's living quarters are located on a parcel which a certain citizen is trying to get their hands on. Apparently, they're using an Enki contact to dig up proof—something that's known to be illegal, since the Covenant cannot partake in cases happening within city walls. Can the Vagabonds find evidence of this shady connection, and will they also take the chance to strike a blow against the Covenant's reputation?*

Shepherds

While insiders think that a chance for life in the Core Sectors is something worth fighting for, those we've labelled "shepherds" feel like that fight—a struggle to change the Arku's ways—puts the lives of those who need help right now in jeopardy. For them, survival cannot wait, especially when knowing that there are places out there where Vagabonds might have a fighting chance.

In this manner, the group attempts to use their position to effect change in Penumbra and Umbra, going as far as founding their own settler companies and directing resources to supporting amnesiacs fighting in the far corners of the world. The group will need to make an effort not just to care for their connections in Antumbra, but particularly for those far from home, making sure communication channels across the regions remain usable, and often requiring them to keep patrons at home and abroad close, to guarantee the lifeline to the newborn communities stays intact.

This opens up great possibilities for the group to get creative with their story—such as playing in separate, simultaneous games connected via these networks of support, or playing side-stories focused on what happens in the farther Umbras. Think, also, of the way their Collective Memos will be shaped by the experience: after all, this path signifies the most selfless for the Vagabonds—given that they choose to sacrifice in order help unknown kin hundreds or thousands of kilometres away, all in order to build a haven they might never see. That's most certainly a tale for the ages!

Tale-Sparks

- *An Enēšu contact decides to start off a small settling enterprise, based on the acquisition of an Umbraic chart—which shows the positions of energy batteries near the Hidden Waterways. They are in need of volunteers, and a Hauler AI. Will the group be able to convince them to take on Vagabonds on board? And how will they acquire the AI?*

- *After the breakdown of a large Karian Silu conglomerate, a series of fungi plantations are auctioned off—opening up the chance for securing a source of food for Umbraic colonies. The group has a chance to travel to Karik's Crescent and negotiate with the city-state, provided they can find the credits and avoid the curious eyes of a local Nexus. Who will they be competing against?*

The Ultimate Price

Although Vagabonds occupy a very precarious position in Arku society, change—as well as liberation from an existence under the shadows—is possible. Many amnesiacs who have thought about their place in Antumbra have thought about the question of how to appropriately tear the veil; how can they make their presence known to the world, without missing the landing and thereby bringing violence and repression to their doorstep?

There is no fast track from marginalisation to recognition and acceptance. Though there is an advantage to the fact that Vagabonds do not bear the brunt of prejudice from society at large, making swift advances requires them to seize positions of power. This isn't just a matter of exercising that power to their advantage: it means that, when the drapery falls and their existence is made public, people will be able to see Vagabonds at every strata of their society—as folk who've been part of humanity all along. Is this a fair proposition? Of course not. Yet by going public, amnesiacs are making a leap of faith, trusting their lives on the empathy of the Arku. Setting up the pieces on the board, so that their gambit has higher chances of success, is almost certainly a necessity.

But what does the board look like? Knowing where all the pieces go will not only help you visualise the changes in your world as the story progresses: it'll also give you pointers on different themes, for different stories, to lead the narrative towards its culmination.

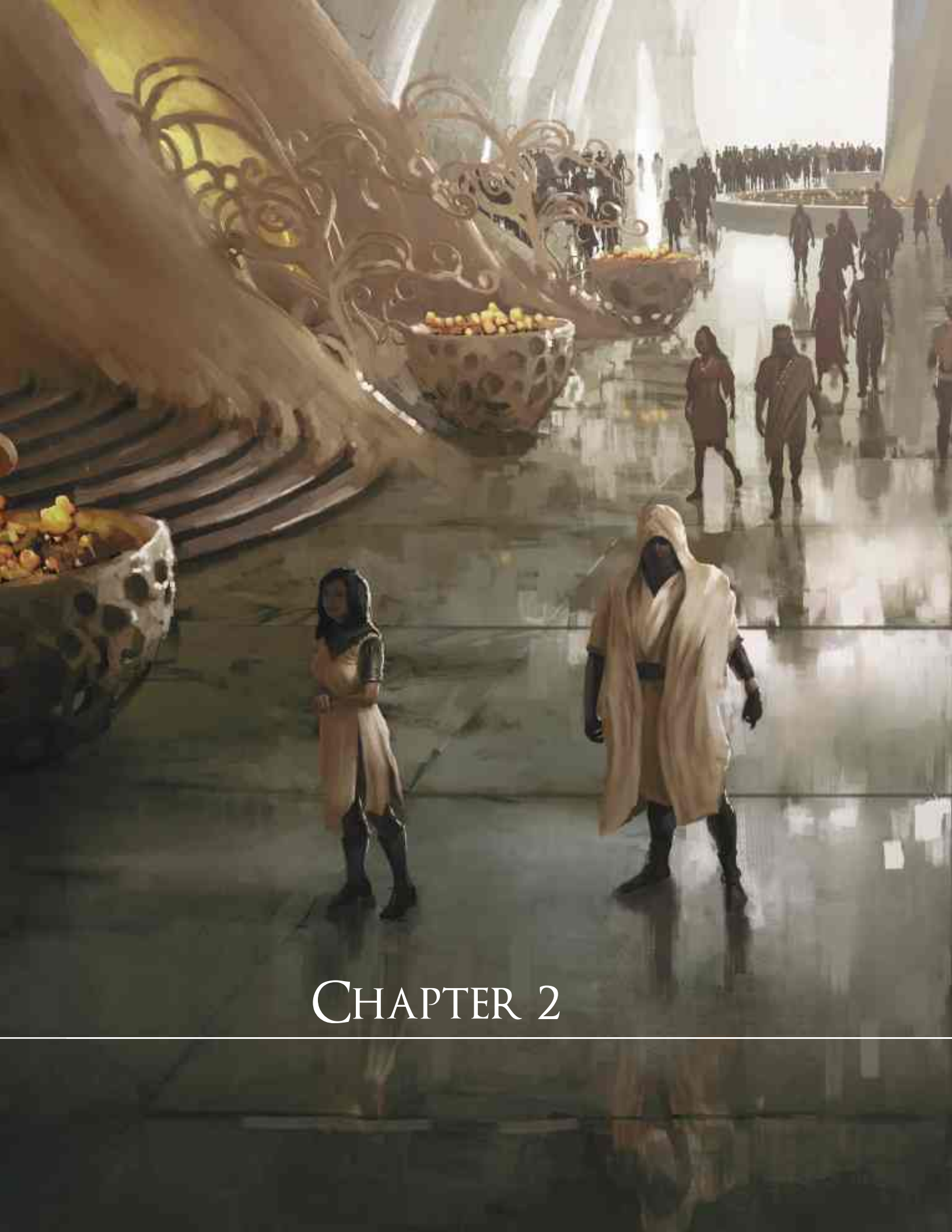
In the endgame, **Enki's Covenant** is likely standing at a low point with regards to the city-state and its authorities. They might have been reduced in capacity, or penalised in such a way that they're seen operating on survival mode—or they might even have been outright expelled from the vault. Think about the kind of stories that could lead the group towards this state: a couple of sessions whereby you expose a series of illegal operations conducted by the Covenant, or in which you infiltrate and disable their systems and entire infrastructure. It might be that their services are being utilised to litigate internal affairs, or that they hold confidential information that might put them at odds with another organisation, such as the Pilgrims, a particular conglomerate, etc.

At the same time, **Silu conglomerates** are likely to be severely weakened. This is necessary because they're often the ones who stand directly above Vagabonds as well as Enēšu, controlling citizen tags and using people as debt peons for their Antumbran operations. Getting rid of their influence means taking control of your lives and those of your friends, as well as sending a message to others showing that they, too, can find a way of setting themselves free if they organise, stay together, and move cautiously. The stories that lead the group to getting rid of the conglomerates are likely to be among the first ones after their arrival in Antumbra. This is because of two reasons: Firstly, they represent the most immediate obstacle for your group. Secondly (and maybe less obvious), is the fact that their downfall is tied to more obvious reasons. Their involvement in Antumbran society via undercover operations and use of credits is straight up illegal—the group needs to bring this to light, but to do so from a position that allows them to deal a deathblow, in order to avoid the repercussions of a whiff.

Lastly, the group has to make an effort to take places among every social class, including the **Council**. With the most antagonistic organisations and conglomerates out of the way, Vagabonds need to make sure their kind is seen in every position of power in order to give a striking first impression. The kind of stories that could lead them to this point might have a lot to do with, first of all, deplatforming any remaining antagonists in power, and forging relationships with the communities of the city-state. Winning the votes necessary to take a seat in the council might pose a series of challenges to the group, from assisting a particular ward within the vault with a series of grave issues, to making backroom deals with friendly Našparu in exchange for future favours (which might lead to new stories in the future). Think about the many roles a council member could have: For example, a story in which the group contains the spread of sirens' neurotoxins across a section of the city might eventually lead to them taking the role of Našparu of the Winds. One in which they discover a liveable, serviceable overgrowth might end up with them serving as Našparu for that area. Another, in which they retrieve the city's Archiver AI, might result in one of them becoming Našparu of the Frontiers. The possibilities are near endless!

Whisperers Unveiled

Once the curtains open and the world is reintroduced to the Whisperers, which story will be told? Of course, that is, the one you've been writing about! The memories you wrote in the Collective Memos will be documented and recorded for all to see, and with blood, sweat, and tears, Vagabonds will no longer roam aimlessly—they'll take their place among the rest of their kin and work together to retrace their lost history—without the need to hide anymore. Hopefully, with you as the example, new uprisings will surface across the rest of the Skyless World—and the protagonists will be there to stand alongside their kin, ready to seize control of their destiny!



Chapter 2

Domed Paradise

Pillars of Antumbra

Them folks from Ashur are stuck up traditionalists. That's what anyone from Nineveh would say, of course, as they themselves are always quick to theorise about this stuff. Archaeans know it; after all, they are generally well travelled—unlike us Karians. We need not leave our Crescent; after all, it's here that Antumbra's prime harvests are reaped.

The Arku perceive themselves as being radically different from one another. Until the settling of the Outer Reaches, pretty much no one in Antumbra knew of life beyond these lands, and yet by then the term had been in use for hundreds of cycles—from Nineveh to Tarsus, always shifting to reflect different projections of humanity's collective identity based on one's own.

Of course, none of these personas truly reflect what being Arku is. Rather, it is the reason why the term is flaunted and thrown around that's universal: It is a tool to define oneself and their in-group, and to put everyone and everything outside the vault's walls in a separate bag. It's a symptom of life within the ever-blooming cloisters that dot Antumbra—an insular life much too preoccupied about addressing the "problem of the Other."

The Arku is a constructed ideal, meant to separate us from the rest. While the ideal traits it presents might be hard to realize for those in the in-group, they're certainly impossible to inhabit for those outside. It is the bane of Vagabonds' ambitions in Antumbra—posing all the stronger a reason to stand up and challenge it.

It is likely that this pursuit for a national, ideal self has its roots within the mythic origins of Antumbraic society. Whether through the tales of the Shepherd, the Prophets of Ur, or the commandments of EUROPA, the Arku have had no shortage of messianic figures to look up to—their ideals of leadership enshrined in these legends of old.

For a long time, these ideas were foundational to the Primarchy of Ashur, and other forms of hierarchic rule. Yet at the end of the Age of Strife, when the Primarchy fell and liberated city-states started pushing to recover their identities, the question of how to rule society became a core issue. Many societies choose, in this case, to build upon an old yet effective method of ruling: that of the wisefolk council.

Speak O' The Wise

Reading the word "wisefolk", one is likely to get all sorts of ideas about who might and might not be deemed wise. In Antumbran tradition, the title has always been granted by recognition from peers within a guild. Council rule in Nibiru evolved from these ancient guilds dating back to the Age of Silence: artisans, farmers, labourers and philosophers of all stripes would converge to choose whomever they deemed the most competent to lead.

With the Primarchy's fall, these guilds became formal branches of government, establishing a system in which different types of votes were given out—used to then pick a representative for each of the branching councils.

Perhaps one of the main differences between Earth's democracies and the councilar rule found in the Skyless World is this; the idea that there could be a "metallurgy vote" or an "agriculture vote", and that these votes would be awarded proportionally to the experience and labor of any one individual. This means that although everyone has a voice when choosing, say, the Našparu of Wellbeing (akin to a minister of health), doctors will have a bigger say in determining who will be given the role. Measuring experience and labor became a matter of great importance, and so it was that from this necessity to calculate one's power over the council, the first social currencies of Antumbra surfaced.

As history passed, each city-state was shaped by the shifting dominance of these guilds—ultimately reflected in the ebb and flow of power across the main social classes of Antumbra (the **Ummânu and Aliltu, see Corebook, page 33**).

Human Economies

For a lot of Earthlings, the idea of societies that do not employ money in the modern sense might be even more otherworldly than the strange of Nibiru. In contrast with Penumbra, Antumbran societies have a very strict line drawn between debt (money), and obligation (the essential exchange of human economies—which are personal and non transferable).

Tale-Sparks

- *A Dreadlander Našparu reaches out to the group via their Nightmare, warning them of a local Nexus. This Nexus aims to present a motion for the Covenant to partake in the screening process for new arrivals to the city-state. Given the risk posed to Vagabonds, the Dreadlander asks to organise a slander campaign against the Nexus. What kind of compromising information will the group dig up?*

- *A local Enēšu community lives in the vault's lower levels along with the Vagabonds. Some people who live above have targeted the community, pushing for them to reconfirm their citizenship status to the authorities. The group is tasked with blocking this operation, which puts their lives and the lives of many an Enēšu at risk.*

For the Arku, debt belongs to domains beyond. In their mindset, all of the people under the vault's domed skies are neighbours, and exchange is something that always bears the mark of the personal—the yearning to establish and tend to relationships between one another.

It's probably easier to explain this with a short example…

One lapse, Awila finds herself at Io's house, drinking some tea. While talking about their last work assignment, a pair of shoes instantly catch the Awila's attention, who then goes on to compliment their delicate shape, the embroidered pattern crowning its soles, and its vibrant colours. Io would then offer the shoes to Awila, who gladly takes them. This is how obligations are established—the next time, Io is likely to go through the same process to obtain something from Awila.

They both will celebrate the exchange by going out to the old quarters, drinking sweet wine and watching a play together. If one wouldn't want to give the shoes up, they would probably berate them. "These shoes are actually really uncomfortable!" or point out that they were a gift. The important part is that the shoes themselves, as non-essentials, are not as important as the shared experience of mutual appreciation for each others' taste and company. This ritual of exchange is par for the course for a society where one's identity is defined by relationships and the act of honouring them, rather than possessions.

This sort of personal obligation is felt by most Arku towards their city-state. Since livelihood and its essentials (food, shelter) are an inalienable right, it's only everything else which one might call "superfluous" that is earned via work for the city-state. In this relationship, the terms for what one gets for their contribution are set (one knows how many hours they have to work to get a bigger house, a new pair of shoes, etc.)—yet the system is still framed within the realm of personal obligation. Your contribution to the state cannot be exchanged between individuals, and most Arku see work as something they do to foster their personal relationship with their nation, rather than to acquire material wealth. This would explain why so many Arku threw themselves into Penumbra when the calling was first raised—thinking about personal gains as something secondary.

While it is true that, in closed-in societies like the Antumbran city-states, everyone has an elevated interest to be at peace with their neighbours, when the Arku interact with outsiders, competition, and the concept of debt do enter the game. The credit economy that rules Penumbra was, in a way, created to exchange things with people with whom the Arku do not want to establish any sort of close relationship. This is at partly why the Enēšu have, as generations went by, increasingly renounced their ambitions of returning to the homeland—wanting nothing to do with a society that treats outsiders as means to a material end.

Who could blame them? From the beginning, they were spoken to in the language of debt, and in witnessing the double moral standard of the Arku, they became detached from their ancestral homes. In that same way, the city-states dissociated from them, and by the hand of the Silu, the master/slave relationship fostered by the credit society became as it is presently known.

Lore Bites
Origins of the Silu

The creation of the Ummânu and the Aliltu as social classes came through with the establishment of council rule. Yet the Silu—the nascent ruling class that lords over Penumbra—were a much later phenomena; a group that, by its very conception, rejects some of the most humane values of Antumbran society, seeking instead to create authoritarian bastions under the shadow of the Torus—wherein their own conceptions of the world and of what's right and wrong can manifest.

In a way, the Silu are a side effect of one of the key political struggles that define societies under council rule: the power divide between the Ummânu and the Aliltu. "Who should get more voting shares?" is one of the oldest questions of political philosophy in Antumbra. After the fall of the Supremacy, popular sentiments against authority resulted in decision power flowing "downwards" to the Aliltu, and some Ummânu—who by then had absolute power over what happened within the secluded halls of their guild houses—started to complain about the new order. Some of them, eventually, decided to split from the social order altogether—the ultimate expression of self-aggrandisement that was all too common in Ummânu meritocratic circles.

What the Silu social order in Penumbra represents should be obvious; they are the ultimate example of what those elitist enclaves would enforce upon the world, were they to truly take power by the reins.

The Moral Standoff

The current, underlying conflict at the foundation of Antumbran society is the clash between the morality of debt—enforced by the Silu conglomerates—, and the morality of personal obligation. It's that elephant in the room few talk about: the Silu, who technically belong to the same society of Ummânu, Aliltu, and Našparu, operating under completely different rules and standards in regards to human relationships.

Most Arku seem to be oblivious to this fracture in their societies, though the decreasing numbers of Arku travelling to Penumbra speak for themselves. At the same time, Silu councils continue pushing for credit to become an integral part of Antumbran society: For debt to insert itself into the Arku's everylapse life. If the Antumbran peoples do not take conscience of this, as well as of the necessity to extend cordiality to those outside their borders, they'll realise all too late that the basis on which all that's good in their society is doomed to collapse.

An Amnesiac's Place

What's curious about this whole ordeal is that the credit economy of Penumbra and Umbra (which the Vagabonds are not only used to, but also through which they learned to rationalise human exchange), are very much like Earth's capitalist empires. Both players and player characters will share the same feeling of being out of place in the Arku system. This is pretty great for storytelling; the Vagabonds will have to play with the cards they were dealt with—seeking for underground markets and hidden commerce rings in order to survive in the Antumbran metropolis.

The problem with this is that, in Antumbra, credit commerce is illegal—meaning that Vagabonds need to not only worry about the usual antagonists, but also about law enforcement and the threat of exile. It just so happens that the divisions of law enforcement that take care of capturing credit users in Antumbra are under the control of the Silu conglomerates themselves—meaning that the people enabling these underground credit markets are the same ones that can capture you for participating in them. This is why communities of credit users in Antumbra are generally seen by the Silu as micro-states of their own, where they get to act as judge, jury and executioners for everything that happens within their limits.

Belonging, Commodified

Are you worthy of calling yourself a citizen? Some modern city-states would question it. Statal credits were originally made for the Enēšu to repurchase their Antumbran citizenship, so it was just a matter of time before speculators among the Silu started lobbying for the concept of citizenship itself to be revised, in order to ease its commodification. The coming and going of people has slowed down since the dawn of the Age of Discovery, yet Silu conglomerates still need bodies to expand their empires. The penalty of exile became, thus, a boogie man levied against immigrant, debt-free Enēšu living in Antumbra—who became easy targets for Arku law enforcement, with the objective of pushing them back to Penumbra in order to "recycle" the labour force.

While it is true that life in these communities is regulated by the constant threat of violence, if Vagabonds manage to get out, their undocumented status can work to their advantage; after all, the Silu cannot really find them through the use government databases, since their IDs are not registered—allowing the protagonists to truly start from zero amidst Antumbra's landscapes.

II
In Dim Communion

It's easy to see how playing Nibiru would find you asking the same questions the Skyless World's faithful ask themselves every lapse. Why did humanity come to be here? How can they find purpose in the station? And what hides out there, beyond the Umbraic black? In the following pages, you'll find a collection of creeds that tackle these and other questions, a basic rundown of their organisation, and how Vagabonds might find themselves at their altars—seeking not just refuge, but answers to the question of their origin.

Facing Uncertainty

Antumbra is the birthplace of hundreds of religious traditions, each of them providing new avenues for storytelling—especially so when it comes to Nibiru's deepest secrets, the nature of the station, and the question of how Vagabonds ended up there. Most of these religions have risen only to lapse out into obscurity, yet those that survived the tides of time did so by exalting the imaginations of their followers, purveying creative answers to the faithful's existential doubts.

There's also another, important boon that the reigning belief systems offer. People that would normally feel out of place in the societies of the Arku usually find comfort in Antumbra's creeds—many of which are devoid of the most complex, bothersome rituals of social life. They also offer a tightly knit sense of community that sees no borders—reaching out from the Assyrian vaults to the farthest settlements in Penumbra, thereby countering the isolationist ways of the Arku. In many ways, they put forth a liberating alternative to the patronage of city-states and—most importantly for you and the group—they can provide haven and guidance to Vagabonds and their ilk.

Experienced amnesiacs, who have endured the kind of apathy the Skyless World often treats them with, naturally see these cults as a way to shed their identity as Vagabonds. Calling oneself a servant of the Shepherd, or a Pilgrim instead, gives them a chance to seize the calm necessary to live and remember as humanely as possible.

While the players might be blessed with knowledge of the universe—which allows them to imagine uncountable potential homes for humanity and the promise of boundless discoveries—, the peoples of Nibiru do not possess this privilege. For them, there's nothing beyond Umbra, except for the deadly barrier of Kabādu and the unknowable darkness it guards.

Humanity in Nibiru doesn't really have the tools to escape the mind space imposed by their context. Presented with this problem, religion finds ideas meant to attack this feeling: it turns to sin as a justification for humanity's dissociation from the rest of the station's species. Usually, redemption comes through via the metamorphosis of human beings: they might transform into bioelectric creatures, or return to a primigenial, embryonic state, or they may even become like the cogs and plaques and cables that make up Nibiru—becoming one with the Skyless World.

Whatever it may be, feel free to let your imagination run wild: the fact that a chunk of the Nibiru world is based on science doesn't mean you should limit your fun due to it. If one particular idea from the following pages seems interesting enough for you to run all the way with it, make it real! We are sure the revelations coming your way will make for great drama and memorable moments.

Church of the Shepherd

Probably the most politically impactful creed found across Antumbra, the story of the Church of the Shepherd is known to pretty much every Arku—as it spread along a host of other ideas brought over by the Supremacy. While it existed in Ashur for hundreds of cycles before that time, it was only afterwards that it began its multiple metamorphoses, with every corner of Antumbra developing new readings and rewriting the tale. The Primarchy might have seen this as a problem early in its history, but as the empire cracked and the divide between the church and the Primarchy widened, these fringe interpretations started to flourish, blossoming as the last remnants of Ashur's domination vanished.

Presently, the Shepherd's cultists are small in number, with most of them residing in Ashur and partaking in the city's politics on the Traditionalist wing of the council. Outside of the Ochre City, the cult has mostly left its mark in the many festivals and customs associated with it: you can find Shepherd altars at homes in places as far as Oxydia, with celebrations running across many cycles, paying reverence to the mysterious Assyrian messiah.

The Progeny's Conundrum

"Like father, like son"—the inheritance of humanity's virtues (and flaws) is a big subject for those who believe in the Shepherd's myth. After all, we are talking about a divine figure who taught humanity how to live, and though we can attest to the validity of its teachings when it comes to humanity's engineering marvels, the same is harder to tell with regards to the moral lessons the Shepherd left behind. The Assyrian Supremacy and its horrifying deeds were justified under these precepts—stating that humanity could really not know better, having inherited its bellicose propensities from their absentee paternal figure.

Still, given that most other societies in Nibiru have been able to renounce war, it'd be fair to say that avarice, selfishness and apathy were not exactly inherited from anywhere—and most certainly aren't an inherent part of humanity. What is truly human then, and what sort of example can we make out of the Shepherd's story, in order to pave the way to a better society? These are the questions that Cultists of the Shepherd ponder on today.

For the Vagabonds, these questions get more specific. Some amnesiacs have been able to scour deep into their memories and use all methods available to take a peek into the distant past. How can we reach into the farthest memories that remain? What's needed to find the keys to this distant past? From recalling embedded in ancient artifacts, to encoded memory triggers inscribed along the station walls, knowledge of this far gone era could shatter humanity's preconceptions of its own nature, maybe even seizing history from the hands of violent men.

The Ancient Footpath

While some amnesiacs ponder silently to reach for the Shepherd's legacy, others prefer a more direct approach to answering their questions. They utilise their gifts to recreate the ancient path that the Shepherd took when it left Antumbra. These Vagabonds (the same Vagabonds that eventually found their way into the vault of Xanadu) see their ultimate goal as that of finding their idol's whereabouts, which point to somewhere far into Umbra.

Storytelling Lessons
Divergent Trails

In the previous chapter, we discussed how and why Vagabonds might enact change in the Skyless World. One aspect that should be clear now is that faith, and the way it frames humanity's place in Nibiru, should be of important consideration for the group. This is something the amnesiacs won't be able to ignore for long! But how can you introduce cults to the story?

First, you can start by hooking them up via a situation akin to the ones described in our Tale-Sparks below. Feel free to offer Influence Points, giving in return strange dreams and even memories, which could hold clues about the greater forces at work, hinting at the group's place in the grand scheme of things. Then, you can bring in faithful NPCs, who will invariably ask the Vagabonds about their views on the Shepherd tale and about their vision for humanity.

If the group stays in Antumbra, refer to the themes described under The Progeny's Conundrum section. If they wish to travel the Skyless World though, the Ancient Footpath might hold the basis for your adventures—also granting you justification to visit the settlement of Xanadu!

Tale-Sparks

- *Within the halls of the Assyrian Citizens' Museum, an organic-looking vase is preserved behind a glass. When nearby, Vagabonds can sense an unnerving aura, as if the vase were carrying the weight of humanity's history within. Turns out, it seems to contain the memories of an ancient Vagabond. Is it really the group's call to seize these memories? And what could happen if someone else does?*

- *While infiltrating an Enki laboratory, the group finds an imprisoned archaeologist by the name of Ashurbanipal. He claims to have found that the Right of Might wall inscriptions, often used to glorify Assyrian military traditions, were engraved hundreds of cycles later than thought. Can the group make sure the message is divulged without it getting the messenger killed?*

Pilgrims of the Core

Standard bearers for the most widespread faith in the Skyless World, the Pilgrims have arguably shaped humanity's ideas about nature and the universe more than any other creed—their message of transcendence and new beginnings resonating throughout Nibiru since before the Supremacy. Their beliefs are simple: Humanity is destined for divinity, and a life well lived is a life that prepares us for this transition. It is well lived when we get the chance to wonder and appreciate the world around us, and especially so, when we get to choose our departure date.

Departure comes forth via the Pilgrimage—an epic journey that starts every four cycles, in the Flooded Countries, running across the full width of the Skyless World, and arriving at Ashur right before setting off Core-wards. Fuelling the spirits of the Pilgrims is the desire to become one with the Core—their bodies molten into the very essence of Nibiru, morphing into part of the station and spending the rest of eternity cradling humanity.

The First Last Journey

During the Age of Whispers, the city of Ur gave birth to the Naturalist artistic current, which focused on blurring the lines between the artificial and organic worlds. If ancient portrayals of humanity living in the station showed both as separate entities, these new works focused on melding both in ways where one's end and the other's beginning couldn't be told apart. At the time, the Naturalist current inspired many to study Nibiru under a new light, and among these thinkers were the first Pilgrims—who set off to the Gates of Ashur, ascending along the vault's walls and finding their way into the blazing halls beyond. Of the thirteen, only one returned—Mentis, who came back to serve as first witness to the other twelve's transcendence, and to prepare a new Pilgrimage into the Core.

The Mentis Tradition was thus founded, and with every new generation of Pilgrims, the cult grew rapidly. From its meagre beginnings, it came to mobilise tens of thousands, who marched alongside wandering chapels and armies of preachers. The journey's goal was seen not just to serve as a gateway to afterlife, but also as a wandering carnival of divine grace—with Pilgrims assisting local communities, performing maintenance on station facilities, and even growing gardens and caring for wildlife as they passed. The philosophy behind it was simple: since they were to become the station in the near future, they might just as well start with their divine task beforehand, helping Nibiru sustain life by "assisting" its normal tasks of maintaining the order of creation. Such is the Pilgrims' dedication to the cause that many a settlement often plans around their arrival when tackling particularly ambitious projects, knowing they can count on them to aid in any big endeavours they might undertake.

However, the Mentis tradition is not the only branch of the Pilgrims. The organisation is split into many different schools that focus on one or the other aspect of transition. It all circles around the question of the essence of divinity: Is it about the body we inhabit and its power, is it about its purpose with regards to humanity, is it about the faith it can elicit in others? The second largest current of thought places its bets on the first one—the one called the Corpus Tradition. Members of the Corpus quite literally seek to embark on the Pilgrimage with a good chunk of their actual path to transcendence done and dusted—transforming their bodies with steel and circuit, aiming to reflect Nibiru's likeness in their skin.

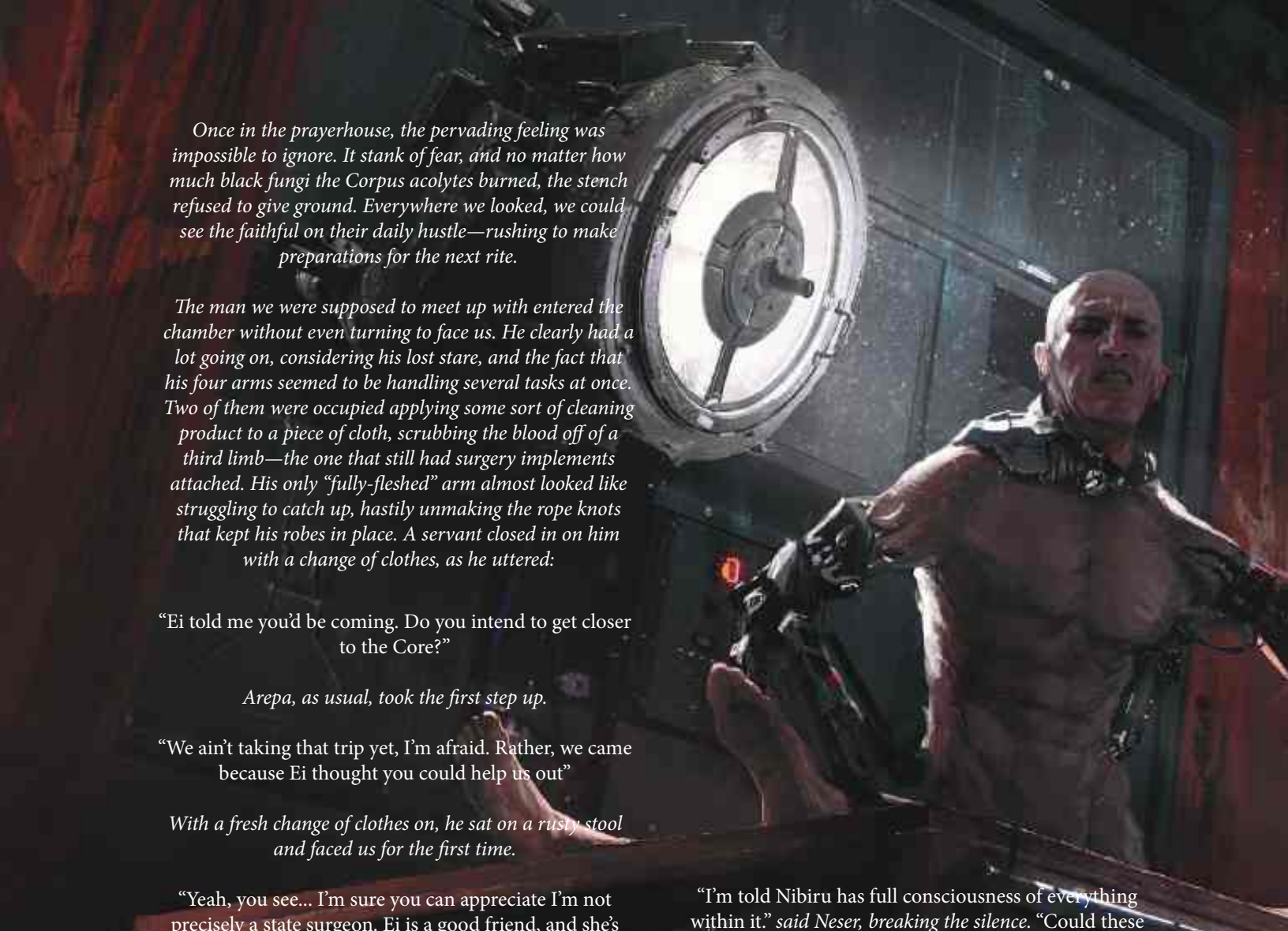
While other traditions may take different approaches, the Pilgrims welcoming nature has seen people of all walks of life taking refuge under their wing. The nature of the Pilgrimage is as such: A joint venture that welcomes everyone, as long as they are ready and willing to seek for divinity, etching themselves into Nibiru's steel visage.

Lore Bites
In The Spirit of Pilgrimage

There's something inherently rebellious about the Arku—who have been born and raised in extremely isolationist societies—embarking on an epic road trip with strangers from all throughout the world. Sure, the rulers of Antumbra don't have to worry too much about possible consequences, given the trip's ingrained finality—yet the fact is that the experience is, to many of the participants, an eye opening journey. In many ways, it counters a lot of the narratives used to justify and coast off of Arku isolationism.

Based on these revelations, you could guess correctly that there are always attempts to escape the congregation, seeking for communal life outside. This is one of those situations where the cult rears its ugly head, sending off Mentis priests to try to convince people to return. While a considerable number do return, the ones who do leave permanently often go on to form communities far from the grasp of the state authorities, settling the far off sections of the Longlapse Way and even the Flooded Countries.

While most Arku would question the success of those idealistic ventures—and the Pilgrims do make an effort to hide figures related to abandonment—the fact remains that even those who have rarely experienced life outside the bubble can break through and face adversity as long as they stand together.



Once in the prayerhouse, the pervading feeling was impossible to ignore. It stank of fear, and no matter how much black fungi the Corpus acolytes burned, the stench refused to give ground. Everywhere we looked, we could see the faithful on their daily hustle—rushing to make preparations for the next rite.

The man we were supposed to meet up with entered the chamber without even turning to face us. He clearly had a lot going on, considering his lost stare, and the fact that his four arms seemed to be handling several tasks at once. Two of them were occupied applying some sort of cleaning product to a piece of cloth, scrubbing the blood off of a third limb—the one that still had surgery implements attached. His only "fully-fleshed" arm almost looked like struggling to catch up, hastily unmaking the rope knots that kept his robes in place. A servant closed in on him with a change of clothes, as he uttered:

"Ei told me you'd be coming. Do you intend to get closer to the Core?"

Arepa, as usual, took the first step up.

"We ain't taking that trip yet, I'm afraid. Rather, we came because Ei thought you could help us out"

With a fresh change of clothes on, he sat on a rusty stool and faced us for the first time.

"Yeah, you see... I'm sure you can appreciate I'm not precisely a state surgeon. Ei is a good friend, and she's made myself aware of your particular situation, but before I do anything I'd like you to understand my situation."

A blood-curdling scream pierced through the dense atmosphere of the chamber. The man seemed unfazed.

"Right" *said Io, taking their time with words.* "Our memory on the Corpus teachings are a bit rusty. Would you care to enlighten us?"

With a compassionate smile, the man replied: "You can guess that I'm not exactly in the business of taking stuff away. Now, I'd be lying if I said that the Corpus doesn't perform health-betterment procedures within our holy houses, yet usually these procedures are about bringing Nibiru into your body. What I want you to understand is that, if we are to remove those trackers from you, we need to put something back in—preferrably in the same place."

Silence befell, as if the house knew of our necessity for momentary reflection. Every single one of us stared down, deep in thought, before we seeking for each other's eyes.

"I'm told Nibiru has full consciousness of everything within it." *said Neser, breaking the silence.* "Could these trackers be reconfigured, so that they register us as facilities of some sort—like a battery or antenna?"

"That would mean showing up in every control point across Nibiru as a *building*, Neser" *retorted Arepa.* "A building that moves".

"Do you really think anyone seeing that would identify it as one of us, rather than some sort of glitch? It certainly beats appearing only in Covenant scanners." *exclaimed Neser.*

"It would definitely make us look like a part of Nibiru, even if it is some sort of anomaly." *I said, thinking out loud.*

The man smiled. His eyes lit up.

"I see you are already observing this problem through renewed eyes. " *He took a brief pause, a deep breath, and got up—ready to resume his duties.*

"So, who's gonna go first?"

Core Celebrants

An early offshoot of the Pilgrims of the Core, the Celebrants are a collection of philosophies that shunned the bold, yet (in their words) reckless philosophy of the Pilgrims (which they characterised as "diving headfirst into the most final of answers"). Celebrants prefer to face their existence in a more private, intimate manner, rather than with outward militancy—theorising on the question of transcendence and studying the Skyless World's makeup to try to understand it.

This outlook has birthed a myriad of different traditions, most of which are found in full bloom across the lands of far Penumbra. While Celebrants are everywhere, it's only when released from the shackles of the city-states and their influence that they truly get to realise their vision. Let's take a look at a few examples…

Divine Inspiration

The communities of Longlapse Way are famous for their ingenuity in the way they've re-imagined social order in Nibiru. Among these, the Second Cycle community is notorious for their ambition. They are a Celebrant philosophy that feels humanity should imitate Nibiru's architectural design in order to find peace. In this manner, they've settled a cluster of dead vaults near a network of flooded hallways, which seem to spread outwards from the same disaster spill that brought ruination to the communities of the Flooded Countries. Following on the example of Nataku, they've set up pressure gates and utilised the power of water to bring to life a jumbled-up machine, which provides power independently from the Core grid. Through cross breeding of fungi, they've built a working life support mechanism with air purifying qualities, and even created an ornamental replica of the Ninevite Ziggurat.

Most importantly, many of the techniques they've used to adapt their home turf are now starting to circulate among the communities of Longlapse Way, helping them further their position and that of many an independent community. Under that same philosophy, the Second Cycle has set up an entirely new historic timeline by which to measure time and events, with the turning point being the foundation of their home. In a way, they seek to divest entirely from any way of measuring time and organising social structures that could be reminiscent of the old Arku ways. Their faith in the Core as a source of divine inspiration is particularly inspiring for the proponents of Free Penumbra.

Reaping the Thunder

Almost 30 kilometres beneath the plaques of the vault of Zuccabar are a group of abandoned Assyrian advance outposts, found and settled by a group of Celebrants hundreds of cycles after they were left by the Primarch. The group that discovered them call themselves Tsarga's Blessings, and they've been mapping out the Core's outward connections for dozens of cycles. Their vision posits that the Core's cycles are conceived with equality in mind; humanity is supposed to settle its periphery and share in the light as it makes its rounds. No one should suffer dark hours, lapses, and even cycles in remote, ravaged lands; the Antumbra we know is only a small segment of the Core periphery, and the Enēšu above all should not struggle to live in a desolate steelscape they were pushed into—not if they can seize the chance of settling a second, even more bountiful Antumbra.

To this end, and from their base along the supply tunnels of Zuccabar's life support battery, Tsarga's Blessings maps out the Core's powerlines, seeking to find—amidst the mind-numbing labyrinth of service tunnels and hallways—the one door that will lead them to their promised land. In the same way that the Core is meant to provide for humanity, they've organised society as an endless cycle, in which everylapse sees the group providing for a single individual, building up their food stockpile and addressing all long term needs and wants.

Radical Cults

It shouldn't come as a surprise that most of the philosophies under the umbrella of the Core Celebrants are born as a response to the pervading influence of nationalist thought. These beliefs are often potent enough that they can help uproot the core precepts of societies founded in violence, and as such can form the basis for stories of radical Vagabonds coming up with new ideas to form the basis of their society. It's a good thing to have these in mind, especially if you're thinking of faith and its relation to politics when building the group's collective identity!

Tale-Sparks

- *A BrightTowner has been gaining a following in Nineveh, inspiring people with their stories of skies and stars—a story that has inspired people to imagine these stars as an endless ocean of Cores shining throughout eternity. A cult forms around the mission of reaching BrightTown. How will the group become involved, especially after one of their own is identified as a native to this idyllic, legendary village?*

- *The group happens upon Tsarga's Blessings and their hidden vault. The sight of their schematics bring forth memories in some of the Vagabonds—memories that could help them find a way to a new Antumbra. Will they share this information, and what will be the consequences of such a discovery?*

Nineveh

If there's one place in the whole Antumbra that can be called anomalous, the City of Lights is probably the first to come to the minds of many. In several ways, Nineveh represents Arku traits in the extreme, what with being in total isolation for hundreds of cycles, yet in others it's as different from the Arku stereotype as it gets. Its citizens have delegated plenty of agency to EUROPA—the ominous AI that lives at the city centre—, and while many Arku might see that as something truly puzzling, Ninevites themselves seem to be doing just fine.

The way Nineveh is a projection of the AI's philosophy speaks to the fundamental differences that can make human societies seem completely alien to one another. Rooted in this is a giant rift in how people derive value from work. In truth, we might not know what EUROPA's dreams are like, but by looking at its work we can see that many of the traits that other civilisations ascribe to human nature (specially those carrying the baggage of the Assyrian Supremacy), are just the product of social conditioning. More likely than not, it's due to this that many have perceived Nineveh as a threat across history.

Ways of the Ninevites

Like any good work of art, the city of Nineveh deeply reflects the feelings and thoughts of its creator. From the Rule of Three—the basis for the Triarchic Order, giving its shape to the city—to the red lights and glistening surfaces that regulate everylapse, the urban landscape could almost be seen as an extension of EUROPA's body. Visitors in the past have been told, when asking to see the city's progenitor, that "only by looking at the city's buildings and streets, you're starting to get to know them". And you could also say something of the sort about its citizens.

Ninevites subscribe to a tranquil way of life that is focused on making the most out of time, caring for shared spaces, and placing friendship above all else—to them, the most enriching aspect of life. This philosophy did take time to shape up, as EUROPA itself underwent a learning process throughout history—, one that would lead to the Nineveh of today. The present city is designed so that people be enticed to live lives shared, sporting huge dining halls where people get to have lunch together, play games with each other, all to foster a culture of closeness that is unlike that of most other city-states. Outsiders are often baffled by how a society conceived by a calculating machine could convey this degree of warmth—inviting the thought that, maybe, these preconceptions have something to do with their own ideas of what artificial life is supposed to be.

It's probably this lingering thought that makes for the most lasting impression on outsiders: AIs live side by side with humans, with neither "riddlers" or "rust hunters" or any other security measures in between. Ninevites will tell you that the only difference between AIs and humans is that the former naturally find value in work, while if there's something natural about humans it's laziness.

Sadly, most intercultural exchange with Nineveh throughout history has been with deathspitters at the ready. In all of these, it's been fear of what's different that has propelled animosity more than anything else—which goes to show that EUROPA's isolationist policies might be somewhat justified. Maybe it's because of the intimacy of communal life, the need to close up and care for the in-group, and its anti-normative ways of thought, that the City of Lights is seen by many Vagabonds as an ideal place to live in: a fitting society of outcasts.

But how did it come to be this way?

Light's Origin

Ninevites are said to come from one of the tribes that splintered off of the original peoples of Ur—escapees from the city-state's old plagues. Like many human groups at the periphery of states, they sought to remain close to the Pond, near its branching waterways and the fertile grounds they fostered. Yet this tribe in particular seems to have veered off from those locales, diving into the tunnels below—the bowels of Nibiru. In a dead complex, found right between the modern vault of Nineveh and that of Nisibis, they are said to have discovered the carcass of EUROPA—a strange AI, the size of a small apartment building, draped in shimmering black steel. In its death throes, the AI offered to lead them into a secret garden, if only they could rescue her from demise.

The peoples of Nineveh did so, and mounting her on a grand pedestal they carried her through the power lines running towards the Mirage, near of which they found a hidden gate. It is said that EUROPA produced a key, granted to each of the soon-to-be citizens, unlocking the vault and pulling the veil from a teeming, lush habitat—the Ninevites' new home. As they settled, it came natural to follow EUROPA's designs on how the village would be built; people mobilised to interface the AI with the vault's systems, and soon they saw the fruits of their obedience blooming—the shining pearl of a city rising in perfect geometry on the vault's floor plaques.

Among the creations that EUROPA conceived, AI was one of the key parts of its plan—with several types designed to fulfil different roles across society. Repeater AIs served to communicate with EUROPA when far from its pyramid-shaped abode, Children AI played around with kids while parents were off helping the settlement building efforts. From the start, AI became just a normal part of everyone's life, and though they did mostly serve humans, humanity gradually shifted to spend their more busy hours maintaining and caring for AIs—who eventually handled most of the hard work in Nineveh.

Eras of Nineveh

Secluded throughout the dawn of the Flicker, the City of Lights saw its early history carry on far from the violence of the Age of Silence. During this time, Ninevites spent a lot of time thinking of their relationship to EUROPA, and pondering on the meaning of autonomy. The first hundreds of cycles were not bereft of turmoil: EUROPA's designs were meant to optimise life towards goals inadequate—pushing fixed, utopian ideas of common purpose and building the city to ensure legibility of its population and easy policing. These plans backfired quickly, as Ninevites discovered this "high modernist" approach to be asphyxiating. Archaic Nineveh was a city of narrow walkways, cleared alleys where hanging out was made inconvenient by design.

It was around these times that Ninevites debated long and hard about their relationship to Nineveh. What were the real costs of letting go of certain freedoms? What degree of control did people want to have over their little corner? The conflicts that brewed within EUROPA's vault might not have involved much in the way of bloodshed, but they were certainly intense—everyone knew what sort of society they didn't want to be, but the way in which they could avoid that was always a hot topic.

Eventually, Ninevites gathered in popular assemblies to discuss and present proposals to EUROPA. Always, it accepted these propositions, emboldening Ninevites to try different experiments on running their communities—separate districts becoming self-contained trials of social creativity. Some of these were far from successful, yet overall, the experience itself taught Ninevites a lot about communal living. More than everything, they learned that not being subjected to the threat of violence was essential for peaceful living. Alongside them, EUROPA went through growth as well: It understood the ways in which the design of the city could foster sociability as the ultimate foil for conflict. In a city where everyone's interest was to care for their neighbours, the ideas of outsider city-states, of human behaviour that need be policed to reign in "peace", became all the more foreign.

Time went on, and as the story goes, the time of the Assyrian Supremacy came about. Blood ran along Antumbran hallways as the Primarch's war machine ravaged the lands. The peoples of Nineveh were made aware of this hundreds of cycles after the establishment of the Primarchy, yet when they did, it was impossible to look away. The assemblies debated at length, and eventually came to the conclusion to intervene—a decision that had a fair share of detractors. EUROPA was given the proposal, and it is said that this was the one time the AI asked for the course of action to be reconfirmed.

As they did, the assembly lines were reactivated, and new creations poured out of Nineveh's moulding pools—automatons designed to violently push into Ashur, seeking for an audience with the Primarch.

Ninevites made contact with many of the besieged city-states that were still resisting the Supremacy's advance. They organised supply runs and eventually came into contact with the Assyrian forces. While at first these clashes were very one sided in favour of Ashur, the tables soon flipped: EUROPA received heaps of information on how the empire operated, from the macro level to the heat on the ground, from grinding battles across the main hallways, to horrifying skirmishes deep in Antumbra's service tunnels. With unnatural coordination, Nineveh's new automatons guided their people through untrodden tunnels, surfacing at the heart of the Supremacy and knocking at the gates of Ashur, cutting off supplies and choking the life out of the Supremacy.

Aftermath

The next couple hundreds of cycles would see the vast majority of Antumbra's inhabitants dealing with the aftermath of the Supremacy, tied up in litigation, on sovereignty and reparations, and facing an identity crisis that would last even until today. One would be right in assuming that the issues Nineveh went on to face were minuscule in comparison—yet for Ninevites, the shock of contact with the outside world reached deep, pushing them to question many assumptions they have had about the rest of humanity. EUROPA's children agreed that total isolation was unsustainable. The degree to which the city would open up was, however, a matter of strong debate. The Ninevites' very sense of humanity was put to the test, as thousands of war refugees pleaded for mercy at the gates of the City of Lights.

In a display of harrowing apathy, thousands of Ninevites demanded from EUROPA a complete lockdown of the city—aiming to prevent the thousands from entering. Showcasing a behaviour previously unseen in history, the AI declined their request—and proceeded to open the doors. Care teams and a host of Children AI gathered up and built houses for the refugees, and the remaining forces of Nineveh's automaton army (which was at the time being disarmed for repurposing) were employed to seek for new sources of food and nourishment, in order to make sure everyone was well accommodated.

The refugees came from ravaged city-states, some of which aided Nineveh's efforts, most of which cut any ties with their stranded citizens. As the cycles went by, the vast majority of these refugees received aid from EUROPA to relocate into autonomous communities in the Outback Domains past the vault of Nineveh. These communities would, in time, become the bridge between Ninevites and the peoples of Penumbra, establishing a trade network of towns and hamlets whereby history and ideas would move up and down—this, hundreds of cycles before the launch of the first Ascendant. From this exchange came to Nineveh a host of new ways of thought, which influenced Ninevites to open up to the communities they had helped nurture, as well as to those settled along the Torus Corridor and near-Penumbra—rather than with the city-states of the Arku.

Problems in Paradise

While Nineveh has always seen inner conflict amidst its citizens, some of the most outspoken groups in its history have risen in recent times—standing opposed to the city's increasingly open stance to interstate exchange. These groups are often dubbed as Roadbreakers, given their practice of violently interrupting circulation across the Outback Domains, out of reach of EUROPA's sight, in order to cut off trade with the region's communities.

Lore Bites
Fleeting Identities

The cultural exchange that took place in Nineveh after the post-Supremacy era is probably the single most influential event for the peoples of EUROPA. While Ninevites spent most of their history in isolation, when they did open to the communities of the Outback Domains, they did so wholly—partaking in joint efforts to even track and record the history of humans living beyond the grasp of the Arku city-states. In this process, the face of Nineveh changed—becoming a welfare state that didn't really have much of a "state" in it anymore (its potential for violence having been stripped and reforged into tools of farming, landscaping, logistics, etc.)

Leaving Nineveh and spending time outside of the city walls became an inherent part of the Ninevite identity. Everyone looks forward to and expects from others to partake in relief and settling efforts within friendly communities. Because the link between Ninevites and these communities works outside of a hierarchical structure, the rift that had split Enēšu and Arku never took place. As Ninevites reimagine their place in the grand sphere of humanity, their relationship with the Outback Domains also gives food for thought for people as far as Free Penumbra—people who are invested in imagining what future relationships with the city-states of the Arku might look like after revolution and reparations are settled.

Roadbreakers also operate within Nineveh in a much more subdued way, via campaigns of intimidation aimed at scaring off newcomers, as well as arming smuggling rings meant to supply their operations outside the city walls. Vagabonds in particular have a lot to watch out for with them: Roadbreakers have been reporting to and working with Enki's Covenant for a while now, feeding information on the comings and goings of people to the City of Lights. They are probably the number 1 threat for amnesiacs in Nineveh—and while they might not be as dangerous as the Covenant's overwhelming presence in other city states, the group should still keep a watchful eye of their activities and whereabouts.

City Hall

EUROPA's residence in Nineveh is found within a massive, pyramid-like structure of polished, crystalline metal. At its gates, celebrations are held, as well as popular assemblies meant to relay decisions to Nineveh's otherworldly icon.

Citizens Print

The origin point for Nineveh's AI population, the Citizen's Print is a manufacturing, research and education facility that collects and recycles material from all over the city. Smaller in comparison with other Antumbran automaton factories, the Print is also a place to discuss humanity and its relation to AI, to educate younger generations on it, and to learn about its history.

Athrian Pavilion

Nineveh's prime entertainment centre, dedicated to leisure and the arts, is where Ninevites spend most of their time.From augmented reality to dream galleries, from music gigs to automaton smack downs, revolutionary technologies take part in creating one of the most exciting places in Antumbra—and admittedly the biggest reason why outsiders wish to visit Nineveh.

The Green Ring

The crown of downtown Nineveh is an expansive garden that surrounds the city centre—an ancient forest cradled within the vault, used to gather food since times immemorial. Today it still provides Ninevites with some nourishment, and works as a space to unwind and form ties with Nibiru's autochthonous lifeforms.

Rebqah's Ziggurat

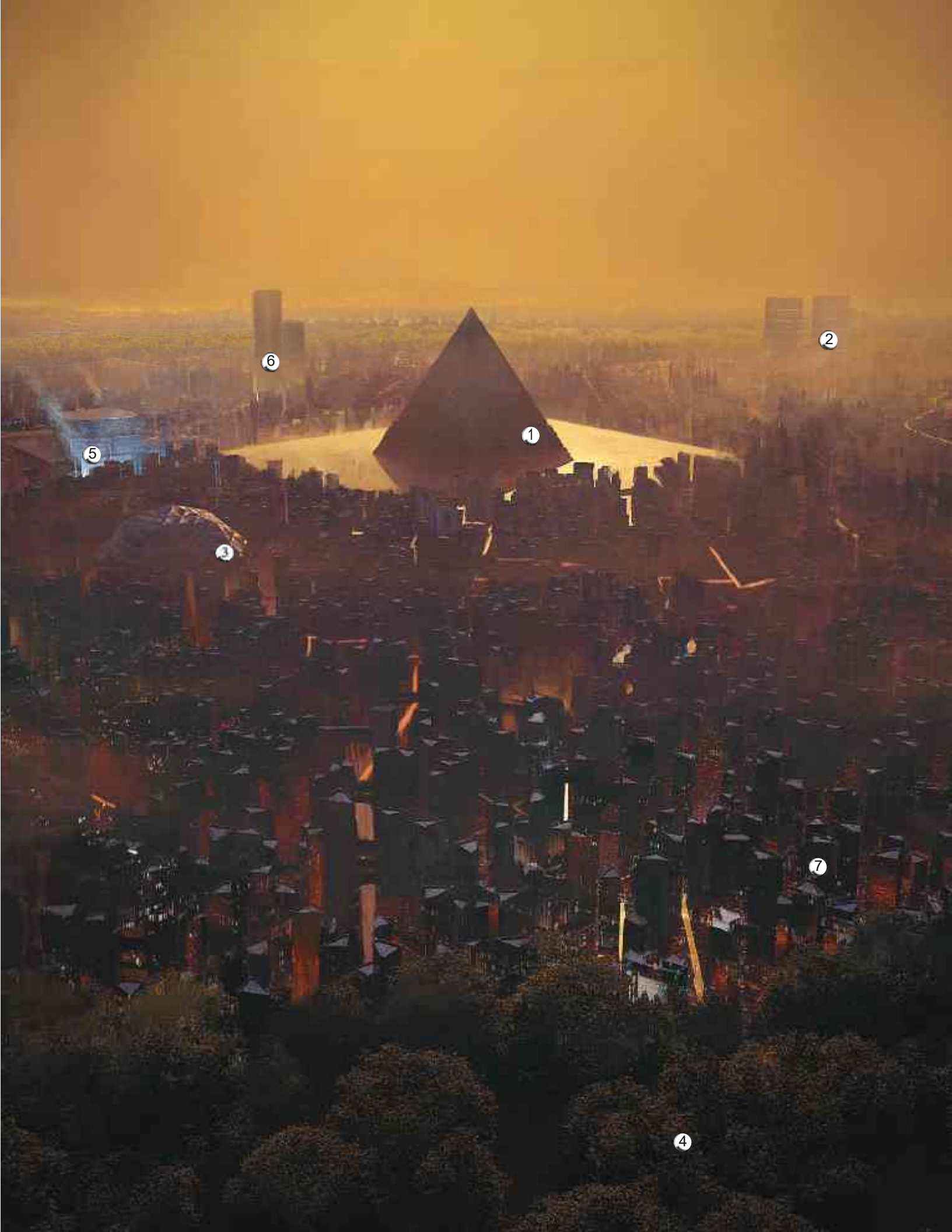
The remnants of the Ninevite Ziggurat are one of the only surviving ruins of Antumbra's Ziggurat network which powers up—and as such, it's seen as an incredibly valuable archaeological site. Today, a research facility surrounds its base, attracting technicians from across all the Core Sectors,who continue their attempts to unlock the secrets found within.

People's Academy

Nineveh's most important academic institution differs entirely from other such places in Antumbra. Dedicated to sharing knowledge among the city's population, its model stands against the rigid hierarchical academies of other city-states, while at the same time producing works of enviable skill and insight.

The Blocks

Most Ninevites make home in the clumped up structures known as the Blocks—interconnected buildings that share water, electricity and common spaces in order to foster community life and better optimise resources. Blocks form labyrinthine networks of bridges and walkways, which can be confusing to outsiders.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City Hall

Legend says that during the journey into the vaults of Nineveh, the peoples of EUROPA discovered a strange rock, many kilometres below the main Antumbran hallways. The rock's deep, pitch black tone captivated the travellers, and so they decided to take it for the ride. Eventually, they built a large structure, following on EUROPA's favourite shapes, and draped in its pitch black sheen—what would be Nineveh's City Hall.

At its gates, three lines of black monoliths—the Idols, built with the same material as the Hall—make a triangular plaza, where the city's popular assemblies take place. It is also a common meetup point for most Ninevites, easy to find since all roads lead to it. Below the plaza lies the handiwork of the first settlers of Nineveh; a complete overhaul of the standard vault power grid, designed to give EUROPA full control of the vault's energy.

Why go There

Children AI usually hang out skating or playing ball around the plaza, but if you need ***to figure out the city***, they'll almost always stop to lend you a hand. Whatever (or whoever) you need to find, they'll stick with you and guide you until you find it, and will also give you a proper introduction to EUROPA if you so desire.

If it wasn't obvious, this is the place ***to visit EUROPA!*** The perks of it being an AI is that it can hold several conversations at the same time, so you'll see that once in the City Hall, there will be plenty of people consulting with it. The experience is quite surreal; something in the design of the hall allows for EUROPA's voice to reach into your bones, feeling it as if it were within your skull. This is how dozens of people can gather around its hulking visage and consult it in relative silence.

Those wishing ***to travel to the Outback Domains*** should head over here; a lot of the communities that have ties with Nineveh keep envoys stationed at the plaza, who offer a space in travelling caravans and task groups for those wishing to hop along and aid their efforts. Usually, these groups intend to do supply and repair runs for communities in trouble, search and rescue missions, as well as infrastructure projects—all good ways of staying off the beaten path and off the sights of Enki's Covenant.

Who to Meet

Most travelers who've been to Nineveh are likely to ask you if you've met ***Arbilaya***, a Children AI who's widely known for their hyper demeanour. Arbilaya is pretty much inevitable: they'll spot a new face from a hundred meters away, and proceed to shower them with questions while offering to introduce them to EUROPA. The group is very likely to run into them—though Arbilaya will probably lose interest and shift to the nearest newcomer once they're done with introductions.

Envoy for the hidden village of Eshunna, ***Tagara*** is one of the most knowledgeable travellers of the Outback Domains. She often coordinates water haulers going back and forth from the Ninevite water source to the depths of Antumbra, recruiting transients to help their efforts. The trip usually crosses a particularly hard stretch of land, where vertical tunnels require the entire hauler AI to be disassembled, and where lions—as well as other, more obscure life forms—have taken to as hunting grounds.

Yadgar is one of the main organisers of Nineveh's popular assemblies—a very helpful individual who helps put together task groups as required by EUROPA. Like Tagara, they serve their community by recruiting locals into action, though Yadgar's operations generally happen close to Nineveh, and usually revolve around exchanging labour for tools and technology—all City-of-Lights-made. If you want to have an AI join in your journeys, get your hands on whatever specific tech EUROPA is making, etc., Yadgar is your guy!

Tale-Sparks

- *Word of a troupe of Rogue AIs marching into the Outback Domains reaches Tagara. She wants to enlist people to locate and retrieve the AIs before a rust hunting team arrives to decommission them. The news are particularly relevant to one of the Vagabonds of the Machine, who recognise one of their past lives among the AIs, thanks to a sudden recollection. What will they find there?*

- *EUROPA reaches out personally to the group, warning them of a convoy of Enki's Covenant that will arrive at the city in two lapses. The convoy is meant to partake in a technology exchange, yet they are likely to scout out the place if they know of Vagabonds hiding. How will the group face this threat?*

Citizens Print

The birthplace of Nineveh's AI population, the Citizens Print is more than a mere factory. It's a recycling center, meant to re-purpose the Ninevites' waste into the next generation of automatons, as well as a learning centre focused on humanity's relationship with their automated neighbours. It's fame is widespread across Antumbra, with many an automaton manufacturer getting their brains from the Print's alumni. The building also produces a vast number of items used in daily life throughout the city, from furniture to makeup products, with its assembly line being fully automated through EUROPA—the place where Nineveh's imagination pours into Nibiru.

Why go There

The Print is where one goes to ***literally make a new friend for themselves***. As long as you treat them with care, EUROPA doesn't have any objections to people wanting to use the Print's facilities to create new AI. Materials, however, should be provided by the visitor, and because the AIs operate under EUROPA's rules, there isn't really any sort of recourse for any Arku to step in and get themselves a new slave. For those, you'll have to go to a different city.

Encoded Sociability

Nineveh's AIs are unlike those produced by other cities in Antumbra. They run very close to their Native Code, in a practically harmonious interaction between it and the one written by the city's almighty guardian. This doesn't mean they don't go rogue (their expiry date is just much longer than average) but it does mean that they are much more independent, have their own wants and needs, and overall behave like normal people. Usually, people who interact with them feel the shock upon the first time: treating them as tools immediately becomes deeply discomforting, and most find it easy to just regard them as neighbours and friends—and particularly faithful ones at that.

Many of the people who study at the Print have, increasingly, aimed at practising their craft beyond Nineveh's walls. While some do wish to see the rest of Antumbra, a majority holds hopes of putting their skills to the service of those who need it the most—and so it is that, if you wish ***to recruit a technician*** of any sort, the Print might be the best place to go to. Their plight is likely to be much more compelling than that of some Silu overlord.

Caravans passing near Nineveh have, during the last couple hundred cycles, known the city to be a good place ***to get repairs when needed***. The Citizens Print can replicate almost any part from simple blueprints, erasing the need to get particular parts distributed in any specific city state.

Who to Meet

Arupha is a sentient printer: A one of a kind in Nibiru (rogue printers notwithstanding). Arupha is especially talented in interpreting weird instructions and people who have a hard time explaining what they want. Whether it's an old granny trying to describe a spare part for their house's plumbing system, or a kid who came to fix their robot friend armed with just a sketch of whatever they need, Arupha is happy to help.

While other city states design blueprints at the service of the Silu industrialists, ***Issavi*** has decided to put his mind to better use. Working alongside with the Domains' envoys, he creates blueprints meant to aid those living in Nibiru's most inhospitable places, processing them at the Citizens Print or sending them to Printer AIs as far as the Flooded Countries. From water and air filters to portable fungi farms, Issavi's work is one of the main reasons many Silu have pushed for sanctions against Nineveh—aiming to thwart his efforts to aid the free peoples of Penumbra.

The power granted by the Print is something worth replicating. ***Nuhro*** is a strong believer in this, and intends to create smaller prints that can be built beyond Nineveh—working with Issavi in order to produce the elements necessary to do so. Nuhro is always seeking for people to carry the fruit of their designs into the farthest reaches of Nibiru—and is likely to aid travellers if they are willing to haul parts and blueprints along.

Tale-Sparks

- *After an encounter with the Roadbreakers, the assailants leave behind a gun that seems to have been crafted at the Print. A contact suggests trying to discover how it was made, how its parts were printed, and to check the register to track down the perpetrators, in hopes of bringing them to justice. What will they find once they reach the culprits?*

- *A Vagabond hailing from Nineveh seems to have reached out, through a strange Revelation, to EUROPA—stating that they're trapped in the dead vaults of Erra. To avoid attracting undesired attention to the fact, the city contacts the group, asking them to get air filters from Nuhro and lead a small rescue team into the devastation of Erra. What obstacles will they find on their way there?*

Athrian Pavilion

During the last couple hundred cycles, and thanks to the ponderings of folk like Athria of Ur and the Freedom From Work League—which spawned after the first generation of automaton production—, Nineveh has been at the forefront of leisure. In a way, society has been reorganised to get rid of work as it is known in the rest of Antumbra, shifting not just away from its toil, but also to focus on educating people for a life of leisure—aiming to erase the association of value derived from work.

The Athrian Pavilion is a place dedicated to that end, providing a myriad of different options for fun and expression, some of which might be incredibly insightful—specially for Vagabonds. While the cultural revolution that spawned it is quite new, its social implications are huge. Who can tell what will happen as more people learn about this place? Only time will tell.

Why go There

Living on the run means being denied the possibility for leisure, and by extension, a denial of one's humanity. Vagabonds that get to spend time at the Pavilion might not just understand this but become specially aware of all the other ways in which persecution affects them. Play can be a harsh, bittersweet experience for them, for it allows them ***to learn about the ways their condition affects them.***

There's ways you can actually simulate this at the table! You could run a different game other than Nibiru, be it a card game, board game, or whatever you deem relevant, while playing from your characters' point of view. Afterwards, feel free to talk to your players about what the game might have meant to their characters, and award Memory Points or even Revelations depending on your thoughts.

Some of the facilities found in the Pavilion might give particular feedback to Vagabonds, such as the Dream Galleries. While in here, Vagabonds get to use the ***Revelation of the Traveller***, spending the necessary Influence Points and enabling them to relive memories as seen in dreams—while also having the option to share them with other people.Whatever they choose to share might provide them with additional insight depending on what other people say—though if the wrong person finds out about these dreams, problems might arise.

A vast number of those who perform, play, and enjoy themselves at the Pavilion willingly share their stories through a complex library of recordings, called the Players Archive. This is a towering database wherein people store recounts of their time in the Pavilion, and that aims ***to connect with people with similar experiences***. Vagabonds have used this to communicate with one another, search for clues, and tag people who might be connected to their past lives in one way or another—as many who have had contact with Vagabonds and their Habitats might let out information through their time here, rather than directly seeking out for the Amnesiacs (which would inevitably attract undesired attention).

Who to Meet

Brula is a painter that enjoys depicting strange environs and dreamlike worlds, all of which seem like purely imaginative and wondrous ideations—except, of course, for the Vagabonds. From BrightTown's lively prairies to palaces of grief, where hosts of Nightmares live, the landscapes of Brula can provide the group with moments of deeply uncanny, shocking realisations. What results from making contact with Brula, and whatever it is she responds to your inquiries, is best left to your imagination.

One of the most interesting projects brewing up in the Pavilion is carried out by ***Jamila***, a collection of life testimonies meant to showcase the variety of human experiences that exist within the station. This sort of work is particularly interesting to a people that has spent most of its history in isolation, and Jamila is dead set on collecting as many stories as possible, from a myriad of different contexts across Nibiru. Given the difficulty of reaching out to the deepest parts of the station, she is said to be preparing an expedition to Umbra in order to collect stories from the farthest lands.

Inana is a collector specialising in strange, seemingly useless objects that have been found across Nibiru, showcasing them in the Pavilion for everyone to see. Among these happen to be several relics of BrightTown. Inana spends a lot of time theorising and drawing parallels with other artists as to their origin, and together they seem to be slowly forming a picture of BrightTown that resembles the original place very closely.

Tale-Sparks

- *An experimental machine is being tested in the Pavilion, by which people can spend not just a few minutes, but lapses within a particular dreamscape or simulation. One of the group's contacts let them know that there's a few Vagabonds planning to use these to explore their memories, and requests them to help keep the amnesiacs safe during their introspective holiday. What challenges will surface?*

- *Inana is about to reach a breakthrough in her research, and so she reaches out to the group, telling them that if they can locate and bring a number of relics of BrightTown to her, she might use a new technology to pinpoint the location of the legendary habitat based on the memories and dreams linked to them. How will the group manage this?*

The Green Ring

Come the time to settle EUROPA's vault, the first Ninevites brought along a plethora of fauna and flora they had found throughout their journeys—dreaming of building a garden within their new residence, which would remind them of their time of transience and their search for home.

That's what the Green Ring is: An enormous forest that crowns downtown Nineveh, forming a perimeter of more than ten miles that allows Ninevites some accessible respite from urban life. In ancient times, the Green Ring was a source of nourishment, and since its inception it has served to remind people of their ancestors, and their journeys in the dark, before the discovery of EUROPA and their new residence.

Along its trails one can find plaques referring to this or that species, inscribed with tales of their discovery, and recounts of everylapse life of Ninevites during their pre-settlement history.

Why go There

Because the species found in the Green Ring were imported into the vault of Nineveh, some of them experienced demographic explosions after moving in—meaning that every now and then, Ninevites need to release them into the wild or hand the creatures over to travellers and wanderers. If you happen ***to be looking for a new companion for your travels***, it's a good idea to hop by and get familiarised with many of these species, such as albino Ayyalu, crested Sparklings, and the Pulsewing varieties that roam along the Torus.

Storytelling Lessons
Menial Wars

While most surfacing recollections come to the Vagabonds during times of strife and struggle (the tension of dice rolls being the one opening for triggering memories), it is worth it to consider how some memories might not come back to us unless we find moments of peace and solitude.

Nineveh can offer Vagabonds with the chance for that: The city presents a place where Vagabonds can truly get respite—and to a degree, this is also true of that other settlement featured in this book. This means drama can be made more subtle, presenting conflict under a different light while still giving an opening for memories. Maybe the new arc revolves around finding a lost piece of art that might hold knowledge about the Habitats, about helping someone raise an issue with other Ninevites, or any other situation. These might not be life threatening scenarios, but it also doesn't mean there is no drama. You just have to make a big deal about what's happening, keep players engaged, and give them a chance to explore their characters in a different light than that which they've experienced so far.

One can find here a plethora of fungi species as well as the rare plant life of Nibiru. Indeed, it's one of the only places one gets to see plants thriving, thanks to the excellent water circulation systems found along the Ring. In the same manner as with the Ring's fauna, those who wish ***to stock up on foodstuffs*** are welcome to do so—and encouraged if they're aiming to take some to the friendly communities of the Outback Domains.

Many a momentous paradigm shift in the history of Nineveh started in the gardens of the Ring. Sinuous trails and hidden flower tunnels give plenty of space for people to sit down and talk in a calm environment. Those who wish ***to meet privately*** and speak about their trials and tribulations find the Green Ring an ideal place—and Vagabonds in particular might find great advantages to doing so themselves.

Who to Meet

The Ring is home to a group of caretakers that vowed to personally devote their lives to the preservation of its full expanse. Among them is ***Shimun***, a Vagabond of the Wild, who has lived in Nineveh for close to a hundred cycles. They have a sixth sense, maybe inherited from their Habitat, by which they can tell when Vagabonds are near. Though they've lived in Nineveh for so long, they have grown to be somewhat disappointed in themselves—in having sought solace instead of going out to help other amnesiacs find their way in the Skyless World.

Part of the group of caretakers of the Ring, ***Elishva*** might look like anyone else in Nineveh, yet in the Sisters she would be recognised as part of the royal family that rules over the young and bellicose city-state. Elishva has rejected her place in the Sisters, and asked for asylum in the city of EUROPA—now fully dedicated to taking care of the creatures that, everyone knows, are symbolic of the Sisters' power—the Assyrian Webworms. As such, she is an expert in caring for and handling the creatures. Elishva still takes advantage of travellers heading to the Sisters to relay messages to the small chunk of her family that still speaks to her.

A regular visitor of the Ring, ***Petros*** is a botanist dedicated to helping the efforts of peoples settling along the far reaches of the Torus Corridor by creating cross breeds of common fungi species, testing them out and sending them along the tunnels of the near Domains. Anyone wishing to prepare for long treks and large settling efforts far in Nibiru would find it useful to speak to Petros—though they are usually not inclined to help anyone. They are adamant on not providing help to the Silu conglomerates, and as such will test anybody wanting to consult them.

Tale-Sparks

- *A strange species of fungi has been spreading along the west side of the Green Ring, massive tubes burrowing into the plaques of Nineveh and tearing into the makeup of the vault. A strange sound, only audible to the Vagabonds, can be heard within—and the answer to combating the invading species might be found by following said sound into the root of the organism. What will it take for the group to dive in? What will they find at its heart?*

- *Reports of a beached Serpent of Assur reach the city, and a group of volunteers gathers to go rescue it. The groups are asked to partake, either in the effort to save the creature, or that focused on building a generator to keep it alive upon arrival. But what is the mysterious reason why one such creature has ended up so far from the Core?*

Rebqah's Ziggurat

An onyx skeleton stands surrounded by dozens of tiny workstations, memento-mori of a bygone era, prior to the current flicker. A long time ago, it is said that Whisperers could project their thoughts throughout the entirety of Nibiru through the Ziggurats: controlling each and every aspect of the station to serve its inhabitants. Whatever happened in the previous flicker is a mystery, and one of the reasons why technicians from all over Nibiru have established a research complex at the base of the structure.

When the first Ninevites arrived at the vault, it was a Vagabond by the name of Rebqah that awoke the Ziggurat, lining the power-charged veins of Nineveh, Dur, and the Mirage. The tale tells that Rebqah whispered to an army of

sleeping angels, crawling in the darkest depths of the station, who woke up to bring life back to EUROPA's abode. Whatever this story might symbolise, it seems like the Ziggurat was indeed the neural centre of Nineveh during the first cycles of settlement. Whatever happened afterwards is to be discovered.

Why go There

The Ziggurat's interior is a maze of interlocking, cube shaped rooms (which can only be accessed if one is allowed to, either by the scientific personnel stationed there or by EUROPA itself. Within are said to be some of the deepest secrets of Nibiru's purpose and functions—inscribed in the language of machines and hidden from the outside world. Within, a large, black staircase ascends into a set of gates which have never in recorded history been open.

Were someone to slip past them, they would find themselves in one of the cubic rooms. These rooms serve as pieces of a complex circuit that can be arranged in multiple ways, depending on what one wants the station to do. Thus, operating the Ziggurat requires not just understanding the language of machines and how to control the pieces, but also, knowing what combination of the Ziggurat's innards will produce the desired result. This is also a great reason to keep most people out of the Ziggurat: if someone were to rearrange the cubes and shut down the entire power supply of Antumbra, it is hard to think of ways by which said supply would be restored without risking complicating things further.

That said, this is knowledge only EUROPA and a few people in the station are privy to. The reasons to enter a Ziggurat will depend vastly on your knowledge of what's inside, what the structure's purpose is, and how you'd use its world-changing powers.

Who to Meet

Dawid is the leader of Rebqah's Coalition—a small inter-state force dedicated to keeping the Ziggurat safe from intruders of any sort. Antumbran city-states have been in talks for a long time to declare the floor under the Ziggurat as inter-state grounds, but so far have only accomplished the creation of this reduced armed force meant to keep it safe. Most Ninevites oppose the group in principle, yet their existence is a compromise they believe necessary to ensure Nineveh's peaceful existence in Antumbra. Dawid himself is a very unpopular figure, given his tendency to escalate and seek for conflict with the locals to feed arguing points to his sponsors in Charchemish and Ashur.

Towering over the research team and the Coalition members, ***Oraham*** is an Archiver AI dedicated to collect information and research logs on the Ziggurat, to then transmit them to the rest of the city-states. The AI is meant to secure free access to the site's data, sharing the latest findings every three cycles at a local convention on tech research. Oraham is very friendly, and generally enjoys telling kids and teens about the known facts regarding the Ziggurat and its history.

Luqa is a researcher at the site, dedicated to studying the materials the Ziggurat is made of. Their research involves not just analysis on site, but deploying contracts across the entirety of Nibiru in search for objects and samples made out of the same material—using agents equipped with an identifier tag, scouring markets and exchange rings to gain more clues about the Ziggurat's makeup. Vagabonds have worked along with Luqa for a while now, given their discretion and connections across Penumbra—with the scientist being happy to aid amnesiacs in exchange for trusty contacts on the ground.

Tale-Sparks

- *Having had contact with Vagabonds in the past, Luqa knows a bit about their gifts, and so seeks out the group to sneak into the Ziggurat—looking to push through the gate and take pictures and samples from whatever they might find within. But how exactly are they going to slip past the Coalition? And in what miraculous, strange way will they manage to get out?*

- *Oraham's cycle is about to come to a close, and will soon need a fix to counter the Rogue Affliction. Problem is, the Convention on Rebqah's Ziggurat is upcoming, and the Vagabonds now happen to have listened to a conversation, about people slipping manufactured data into the AI in order to sow suspicion toward Nineveh and push for an outsider takeover of the site. How will they handle this?*

The People's Academy

The peoples of Nineveh escaped more than the bloodshed and violence of early city-states: They fled from rigid hierarchies that, while mostly gone today, still survive in niche institutions and organisations across Antumbra. The clearest example of this is academia—where the hubris and close mindedness of its leaders have led to movements that openly discriminate against the Aliltu, as well as the creation of the Silu as a social class. Knowledgeable of its dangers, EUROPA and the first Ninevites made it a point to create an education system that not only shared knowledge horizontally, but also tore down the myths of intelligence and the idolatry of specialist professions.

The People's Academy is an attempt at that: Far from perfect, yet providing a model that has inspired similar projects in Penumbra and beyond, it provides a platform for people to submit topics and talks—with students voting and deciding between themselves on the sort of topics they want to delve into. Eloquent folk talking on highly relevant issues usually become part of the regular rotation, while educators that are found to be boring, or

tackling topics too obscure, get to teach less frequently. It's a system that has gone through many different iterations, and while some models have worked better than others, the thought that is generally shared by most Ninevites is that, as long as the education process is thought of as a lesson rather than a dialogue, meritocracy and its vices will manifest, to varying degrees and in different forms.

Why go There

Why surely, ***to gain new skills!*** Vagabonds and anyone wanting to learn anything will find this to be one of the easiest ways of learning any discipline in Nibiru. From robotics and modern farming techniques, to Skyless World topology and first aid, any skill that might not become them through the recovery of their memories can be cultivated here. There are no tests nor graded assignments, and one can usually request for feedback on one's own work. The community of educators found in the Academy is very welcoming, especially for those that have travelled beyond the Antumbran frontiers. Heading to the Academy during downtime can be the perfect justification to develop a new skill, and if you do you should feel free to create memories of Nibiru tied to your time at the Academy in order to show off your newfound knowledge!

At the Academy, the political nature of education is known to be obvious, and so it is that those who want ***to teach something in order to enact social change*** can do so freely. Granted, some courses do turn into long winded political rallies, and the consensus is that that's absolutely OK—as long as they happen in accordance with EUROPA's laws. Vagabonds can certainly take chances on it, though it's always best to pull some of the more personal anecdotes into the abstract (lest your words fall on the wrong ears). Still, the Academy is one of the most accessible platforms amnesiacs can tap onto, and employing it smartly can lead to interesting results.

While most of what there is to learn at the Academy happens in its assembly halls and through dialogue between the attendees, there's also a small archive of "records of renown" dedicated to collecting particularly striking and/or famous courses that took place throughout the institution's history. These archives are free to copy and distribute, and so they might prove useful for people trying ***to propagate certain ideas and skills beyond the Core Sectors.*** Whether it be methods of water purification or alternative energy generation, the right tool might completely revolutionise life in the fringes of the human sphere—a testament to the power of open education and free access to knowledge sources.

Who to Meet

Some of the oldest educators of the Academy shift into mentoring roles later in life, meant to ease people into the institution and help them make their voice heard. ***Ishmail*** is one such person, and likely to be the first one that catches the group's attention as they enter the Academy.

Indoor Politics

Ishmail is a relic of the Academy's old school, who has developed a particularly meritocratic view of education, akin to that of other city-states. While they reckon that there's nothing to gain by them speaking out at their old age, they do have a group of followers that nothing other than intra-institutional crypto-fascists—a generation of students that got to tour Antumbra's schools, and that took in the worst from them—wishing now to change the Academy according to their newfound ideas. They are self defined as the "Reorganisation Committee", facing opposition from a majority of the population (which have obviously reasonable arguments against them), but also from anti-immigration groups, who use them as an example of "the evils of outsider influence in our education system". As good as the Academy can seem from the outside, it's most certainly not devoid of inner conflict.

Ishmail is very kind on the surface, yet deep inside they harbour reservations about the way the Academy has evolved. They believe the place as a whole has become less democratic with time, saying that the aesthetics of being knowledgeable have trumped actual, wise educators, robbing them of a chance to make their mark. That's probably just old people stuff though, which might only surface if you speak to them for longer than what's needed.

Nineveh is most certainly a modern state, regardless of all the ways in which it differs from other city-states across Antumbra. Yet one of the key differences might lie in the fact that, in other societies, folk like ***Ashmu*** would never find a platform that would host them. The reasons are obvious: Ashmu's curricula is meant to impart a set of skills focused on state evasion: a host of ways in which new communities can avoid the advance of labour tax and colonisation efforts, on how to use the Nibiru's unpredictable nature and all resources available to make the life of the Silu and their sponsors as hard as possible. Ashmu has survived several attempts on their life, and their teachings have spawned a movement that advocates to get their knowledge into the institution's records.

Bagiyeh is an Enēšu scholar, sporting about 60 cycles of fighting experience against the Silu conglomerates under their belt. Their conversations on the future of Penumbra attract thousands, and they are extremely knowledgeable of the many ways the peoples of Free Penumbra avoid and fend off colonialist advances over their territories. They also happen to be a Vagabond of the Machine—who can sometimes be seen whispering to themselves in the Lost Tongue while scouring through the Academy's archives.

Tale-Sparks

- *The Academy is hosting a series of talks on the "Legacy of Whisperers", which reframes amnesiacs as "operators in the dark", orchestrating the rise and fall of many a state across history. The talks express seemingly legitimate worries about the Vagabonds' strange powers, yet their true objective is to scapegoat and discriminate against amnesiacs. Who's behind this? And how can their narratives be countered?*

- *An Assyrian diplomatic mission is coming to Nineveh. Bagiyeh seeks to contact their Archiver to retrieve a piece of data, tying Silu power to creeping misery across Longlapse Way. Knowing they can trust the group, Bagiyeh asks if they can sneak past the delegation to interrogate the AI via the Lost Tongue. But what surprising request will the AI make in exchange for this information ?*

The Blocks

Broken down by pearly white walkways and pristine facades, the blocks are the main residential units of Nineveh. About 50% of the city's population live here, with each block housing about 60 people, supplying all necessities through a central hub, and connected through a network of overhead bridges. Clusters of them organize into small communities with their own parks, community and entertainment centers—all built to foster a sense of communal life that can be hard to find in other city-states.

The Blocks are likely to be the place where a lot of your action in Nineveh will happen. For Vagabonds, they present a labyrinth of hallways and bridges—the complexity of which can both harm them or keep them safe, depending on their knowledge of the local cluster. Below ground, life support systems and infrastructure installations offer good places to hide if need arises, with drone patrols hardly ever diving in there.

Why go There

While Vagabonds have a much easier time integrating into Ninevite society than elsewhere in Antumbra, the Silu's all-reaching influence and a myriad of different conditions might put them at risk pretty much wherever they go. The blocks are ideal ***to escape*** into, provided one knows how to navigate their layout. Once one does though, bridge networks and the numerous service access points they sport make them into a great bulwark against authority.

One of the most populous Vagabond communities can be found in the Blocks, existing there since before the opening of Nineveh. This community has thrived thanks to their recurrent outings into the Torus immediacies, where they've located common locales where beached amnesiacs are often found. If you wish ***to contact other Vagabonds***, they might be the obvious choice, though bear in mind that part of the reason why they've survived so long is that they mostly keep to themselves—only welcoming those they rescue from the depths of Nibiru.

The outer periphery of the Blocks is mostly uninhabited, left to be for future generations to move in as the city grows. In these, the Peripheral Blocks, some souls looking for a more secluded existence have settled—as well as a few folk intent ***to conduct activities beyond the sight of the general population***.

Who to Meet

Navigating the Blocks might be daunting, but it doesn't have to be that way: ***Asu*** is as knowledgeable as it gets when it comes to finding your way throughout them, and almost everyone in Nineveh seems to know someone who has a friend who has at some point sought council with Asu. While most advice comes for free, Asu's connections with the Silu result in him asking for credit payment if you need to know very specific information, as well as the location of any particular person. Trust him on your own judgement…

A white-draped tower, sporting an impressive headdress of antennae and wave receptors, stands amidst every block conglomerate—coordinating the all-too-common sight of drone patrols that keep watch over the Blocks. Management of the patrols falls on the hands of ***Baaz***—a man of Archaean ascent who made an effort to shift the use of EUROPA's drone fleets. His well known Patrol Amendments, which were approved by the city almost 60 cycles ago, changed the drone fleet's role from security-focused surveillance to actual community service: guiding people across the Blocks, helping them with daily needs, as well as providing basic medical aid in emergencies. Baaz is a staunch proponent of repurposing a lot of war tech into communal service roles—usually training technicians from other city-states for this mission, aiming at making the Skyless World a more peaceful place.

Gewargis is a Vagabond of the Womb, living in the depths of the Peripheral Blocks. Within their domain, they've changed and morphed the urban landscape to create a strange underground fortress of twisting tunnels—burrowing in their depths to do who-knows-what. Gewargis used to live with the amnesiac community of the blocks, but they grew tired of their refusal to trust Vagabonds from the outside. They now use their time to seek for newcomers to the city, and provide them with safe haven in their strange, warped steel fortress.

Tale-Sparks

- *Gewargis, being close friends with Baaz, received from him a series of codes that give control over patrol drones of Archaean manufacture. They contact the group with a plan: to move to one of the largest Antumbran urban centres, and set up an operation—using hacked drones—to find and aid other Vagabonds. How will they break in? And what will it take to keep this new safe haven running?*
- *Rumours of a troupe of Children AI have been circulating the Blocks. Strange graffiti starts to show up, and soon enough, the group witnesses them making some devilishly clever art in opposition to EUROPA's rule. What will they make of this?*

Storytelling Lessons
Amnesiac Realms

Most city-states in Antumbra setup the Vagabonds to work together to survive (given the permanent threat of violence of Silu overlords and state authorities). Nineveh is different: while entering the city is as hard or even harder than in other cases, once you're in, you're in, meaning that amnesiacs can live in relative peace within the Ninevite communities.

This gives Vagabonds in Nineveh a unique opportunity: that of dissent amidst their own numbers. The community of the Blocks, Gewargis, new arrivals camping at the Pavilion, all of them have the luxury of disagreeing between one another and living by their words. Some of them might see this as a bit of a waste of potential, and some accept it as a privilege that is worth preserving. Truth is that, when crisis really does surface—whether due to a sudden visit by a Covenant delegation, a Silu task group wishing to recover a "lost investment", etc.—this separation plays out against amnesiacs as a whole, and so there's plenty of room for your stories in Nineveh to circle not just around conflict between Vagabond communities, but their identity as a whole via the unique mechanics present in Xanadu.

Colossal Lightweights

Walk along the Giants Parade at the Assyrian Nature Museum and you'll see a face of Antumbra that most wouldn't be able to imagine today. The Core Sectors have always had this potential to foster the success of spectacular fauna and flora; its abundance of resources, open spaces, and most importantly its lower artificial gravity are more than ideal. Antumbra has seen incredible life forms thriving within its halls, even though humanity has long since pushed these to the edge of the light—in some cases outright annihilating them.

Although the most common species seen today in Antumbra have had their turn in the limelight in the *Nibiru Corebook*, it's worth it to document the lives of the less common, stranger native species that make their home here; creatures that have found their way to the outskirts of the Arku city-states and the depths of the Outback Domains—all of which can inspire tales and legends by themselves.

When we talk about "Antumbran giants" we mean that literally: We know that, on Earth, one of the main factors limiting the size species reach is that of gravity. Knowing already the kind of behemoths that we could have in lower gravity regions—such as the famed Serpents of Azure—the only question left to ask is… What other colossal lightweights are there, hiding beneath the vaults and tunnels of Antumbra?

Idols Collapse

Most of the Arku know about the native species of Antumbra through stories about the past, of how the creatures took an active role in the legends and myths of civilisation's origin. This is why, when some of these have contact with human settlements, they inspire awe and evoke complex, conflicting feelings in people. These creatures might have been emblazoned in a thousand family crests throughout hundreds of cycles across the entirety of the Core Sectors, yet the real creatures who inspired such imagery survive on the scraps civilisation throws their way. They are unwilling martyrs in the search for progress—living symbols of Antumbran decadence.

City Roamers

This section delves particularly into the wilder side of Antumbra—removed from the city-states of the Arku and delving into what's below their cozied-up vaults. Truth is, Antumbran metropolis and the environs within aren't very conducive to making these particular species thrive, so if you are mainly going to play within the city walls, we suggest utilising some of the most common creatures found in the station—such as Sparklings, Ayyalus, etc. found in the Corebook. Yet no one would fault you for throwing in a Siren in one of Charchemish's main vents—it'll surely make for one hell of a surprise!

The creatures themselves have long since gotten used to life in exile, having made the Outback Domains their home and the humans living there close neighbours. Many of the communities found therein have established symbiotic relationships with them, perhaps one of the reasons why the Cults of Silence have taken such a hold in the region. Even at the dusk of their existence, it'd seem that the Antumbran giants have continued to fuel humanity's imagination—how they'll impact your story is, of course, up to you to decide!

Siren

Arku kids learn early on not to sneak into wind tunnels—and though many reasons are cited as to why it's not a good idea, the particular one that makes its ways into most cautionary tales refers to Abuba—also known as the Antumbran Wind Siren.

Wind sirens are magnificent beings—the kind that could only survive under the Antumbran low Gs. Weighing only a couple dozen kilos in the Torus, and hovering gently like dancing spectres above Tours-bound air currents, they make use of a triad of articulated limbs to hold on to and traverse the surface of vents and wind tunnels. Though they might seem fragile and harmless at first sight, these predators make use of a potent neurotoxin that they release to the vents through spores, ejected from a pair of glands found at the back of their head.

These spores are carried by the wind through Nibiru's air circulation systems—sometimes travelling for tens of kilometers before entering a prey's olfactory system. The victim becomes addled, made extremely sensitive to the high frequency sounds sirens are most adept at producing (from which they get their name). These eerie melodies seem to work in unison with the toxin to guide addled victims to the siren's embrace. Some researchers have argued that it's these sounds that travelers along the Torus have identified long ago as the famed Hašû Songs (Corebook, p. 44), though the matter is still under debate. What is known is, of course, the danger sirens pose to human settlements—reason why city-states have ongoing treatises with communities in the Outback Domains, to install and maintain air filter systems across the region. Who knows what kind of tragedy could come to pass, were the seed of Abuba spread throughout Antumbra?

Action Types for Sirens include:
For moving (against the wind): 1 Die
For moving (with the wind): 5 Dice
For their toxin to infect a victim: 4 Dice

Tale-Sparks

- *Emergency beacons cry out from the depths of the dark Torus, signalling a spore leak. As the Sirens' song drives barges to their doom, the Archaean council seeks to protect its investment and recover the lost crews. Whatever they are paying the Vagabonds, it sure ain't enough...*
- *A local Enēšu community has become infected with the Siren's toxin. The specimen seems to be living within the vents below the vault. But how did it get there? And how will the Vagabonds find the true culprit?*

NATIVE NAME: ABUBA TARSANA
FAMILY: KIŠUBBIŠ
SUBSTENANCE SOURCE: PREY
LOCALIZATION: WIND TUNNELS AND VENTS
LENGTH: 4 METRES
WEIGHT: 30 KILOS

Ninevite Firecrawler

Seven kilometers below the vault of Nineveh, a vast complex of automated forges works Flicker-round, shaping metal into the very bones of Nibiru. Only a couple of these facilities are found within the known expanse of Antumbra, and this one in particular also happens to be home to one of the Core Sectors' strangest denizens.

Firecrawlers are hulking beasts that long ago migrated from the Ring—the areas surrounding the colossal generators at the Core of the Skyless World. These creatures literally drink the molten steel found in Nibiru's metal forges, triggering reactions within their bodies that generate enough energy for their massive bodies. Hardened, crusty plaques along the creature's spine dissipate the heat within, serving as breeding grounds for black fungi—the creature's main source of nourishment, which it can tend to and reach out for thanks to pincer-like appendages found in the creature's head.

Firecrawlers tend to roam close to Torus-bound air vents, which provide them with a steady supply of oxygen, as well as aiding in the preservation of their body temperature. They usually live for as long as 600 cycles, shedding their plaques about ten times during their lifetime. Most information on their biology comes from Nineveh's exchange with the communities that live near the forge, which have made it a custom to seek out discarded Firecrawler plaques and craft all kinds of spectacular ornaments with them.

For a long time, communities across Penumbra have had a series of projects designed to create an habitat for Ninevite Firecrawlers along Longlapse Way, in an attempt to herd them for their black fungi. This variety of fungi is almost impossible to find in Antumbra, yet it's also a key part in the creation of krajj (the paste used by humans to quickly adapt to changes in artificial gravity). Realizing this plan could grant enormous advantages to Enēšu communities seeking autonomy, Silu agents push Ninevites to stop their support for this plan, seeing it as highly threatening to their position in Penumbra.

Action Types for Firecrawlers include:
For moving: 2 Dice
For defending themselves: 6 Dice

Tale-Sparks

- *The group hitches a ride with a Hauler AI, retrofitted with a massive furnace. Little do they know that their employers are a group of fighters for Free Penumbra, hauling within the AI a dormant Firecrawler. What challenges will they face during their trip?*
- *After finding a sick Firecrawler, the group has an encounter with an unknown tribe that seems to travel in caravans—with impressive palanquins built on the back of the beasts. Communicating with signs, they interpret that the tribe wants help curing the creature. What will it take to make it heal?*

NATIVE NAME: ƎAƆJ O ƆJAƆTA
FAMILY: KIŠUƎƎIŠ
SUƎSTENANCE SOURCE: ƎLACK FUNGI
LOCALIZATION: FORGE FACILITIES
LENGTH: 10 METRES
WEIGHT: Ǝ TONS

Harvest Leaper

Harvest leapers are close relatives to Ayyalu—having developed a series of adaptations that separate them from their more common cousins. Their bodies have a number of air sacs that they can inflate with gas, helping them support their frame. They can control blood flow to paint the plaques in their bodies in dark, intimidating colours, which they then use to scare off smaller threats.

What would probably be their most relevant adaptation though revolves around the way they feed. Because their bowels don't have the same degree of current tolerance, they have a hard time feeding directly from most powerlines. What they do have in their favour, is a series of glands that produce a natural type of fungal growth aids: An emulsion which is particularly good at not only catching fungal spores, but also spreading growth and aiding decomposition of cable coatings. Thanks to it, harvest leapers develop a life cycle whereby they roam along power distribution lines, spreading fungal growth in enough quantities to regulate amperage. Once that's done, they go on to feed from these source normally. This process is complex enough that harvest leapers can only survive in a place such as Antumbra, where there is a wide

NATIVE NAME: ALALA SA UMASI
FAMILY: KIŠUBBIŠ
SUBSTENANCE SOURCE: LAWU
LOCALIZATION: OUTBACK DOMAINS
LENGTH: 7 METRES
WEIGHT: 2 TONS

range of active connections they can take advantage of—not to mention that the artificial gravity of the Core Sectors also helps with their mass. The places they live in are likely to become rich in fungal growth—leading some to argue that it is thanks to harvest leapers that Antumbra became the lush paradise it's still remembered as.

In Penumbra, smaller leapers have been employed to aid fungal propagation efforts, imitating the herding methods used by Karian agriculturalists. However, it is the peoples of the Outback Domains who have found probably the most successful method of herding them, going as far as to catalogue the variations between growth enzymes found across different leapers, optimising growth by assigning particularly similar herds to specific cable sections.

We would be remiss not to mention that harvest leapers have been used to transport large amounts of goods through particularly rough parts of the station—still outpacing the most advanced Hauler AIs produced by the Archaean industrial complex.

Tale-Sparks

- *The bridge the Vagabonds were meant to cross seems to have broken down. Carrying their equipment across is impossible, yet by lady luck's deliverance, they happen upon a stray harvest leaper while camping in the abyss' immediacy. Can they gain its trust and employ it to cross the ridge, before whatever is stalking them from the shadows makes its advance?*

- *Enēšu settlers ask the group to deal with energy supply issues below the vault. The group finds that the powerlines are feeding grounds for a particularly aggressive harvest leaper. Can they find the creature a new place to feed?*

Forget-Me-Not

At the dawn of the Age of Discovery, when the Covenant's power climb seemed unstoppable, a host of different projects were developed in an attempt to advance Enki's trade. A particular philosophy that made its way into multiple research papers in the organisation was that of organic solutions—essentially, engineered organisms that could help the Covenant in a variety of different ways.

Enter the Umbraic Damrina—a flowering parasite that interacts with its host's brain chemistry in ways that were particularly curious to a group of Nexi operating near the edge of Umbra. Although there was extensive research on the plant's properties, it wasn't until the capture of an infected Vagabond that the Nexi put two and two together to investigate its effects on the amnesiacs' mind.

Soon enough the Covenant was experimenting with infected Vagabonds to see the effects the plant had on recordings, visual renderings and recounts of recovered memories. Bio engineered variants expanded the plant's functionality, yet the research would come to a full stop with the escape of several infected prisoners a few cycles after the first big breakthroughs. These had carried on them the variant that is presently known by many an informed amnesiac as Forget-Me-Not.

Forget-Me-Nots take root in the host's medulla, the vacuous mind of Vagabonds being particularly suited to foster their growth. While most amnesiacs should seek help immediately if they notice signs of a colony taking root, some smart Vagabonds have learned to cultivate and prune their bodies as a garden, creating a cycle of remembrance by which they feed certain memories to the organism while fostering new recollections.

Vagabonds who play host to a Forget-Me-Not infestation may spend an MP for the garden to light up their surroundings. They can also feed them with an entire (positive) memory entry, clearing that entry while entering a state of relaxation that sees them earning an MP.

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Tale-Sparks

- *Amriel, a known Vagabond, is killed by an enemy group—taking to the grave the knowledge of a secret path to a safe zone deep in the city. A contact suggests retrieving the body, and using Forget-Me-Nots as well as stolen Enki technology to try to recover those memories. How will the group find the plant?*
- *Upon visiting a farmstead, the group hears the tale of a hidden tomb beneath the service tunnels of Charchemish, where Forget-Me-Nots thrive. What happened there? What is the truth behind this otherworldly vision?*

Armored Icons

A quick glance at the role of automatons in present Antumbran society would have you believe that, since the dawn of time, the Arku regarded AI as nothing more than a tool meant to improve their daily lives. Yet the truth is that, until the time of EUROPA and the discovery of the Triarchic Order, AI was always seen as something to be afraid of—distilling a fear that was rooted in humanity's insecurities about nature and their place in Nibiru. Many creeds within the Pilgrims' religion, for example, spoke of a hierarchical system in which, right below the Core, AIs had taken a place—all thanks to them being intelligent entities that were at the same time made of the very stuff that made the station, as well as being powered by the same raw energy produced by the Core.

Humanity was at the bottom of the line, usually associating AIs more with the mysterious entities of legend they had heard of in records—those called Harbingers. These entities, unlike the simpler AIs found later on, were driven by unknowable directives, only found deep within the bowels of the station, where most people fear to tread. Encounters with the Harbingers were generally believed to be momentous occasions, anticipating great changes in the near future (hence the name through which they were categorised).

There were, at several points in history, attempts at seizing a Harbinger's AI Core—yet the only time this was done successfully, it didn't just brought forth the people's wrath, but also turned out to be a seemingly useless endeavour: These AI Cores are nothing like those of service AIs. Their architecture is vastly different, and their capabilities to control the station's structures will make them extremely dangerous to plug into any network.

Even with that, it didn't stop the Arku from attempting to mimic the design of Harbingers in one way or another. Whether it be their imposing visage or the inner workings of their inscrutable code, they attempted to emulate the divine in as many ways as they could. Very often, these automatons were the work of the faithful, who had the utmost respect for the Harbingers, and who felt that AI Cores were sacred relics that deserved not just a fitting container, but a transcendental role as well. These were not cleanup automatons or walking accounting interfaces; they were wandering altars, sentient gardens, walking icons of faith and authority, servicing humanity—yet doing so by fulfilling fundamental roles within society. These Service AIs are often referred to as Transients, and the differences don't stop there.

Transients get special treatment in many different ways. First of all, they're almost always tied to a particular organisation or creed, though not legally bound to them (meaning they are treated as independent, sentient beings under the law). They're also nigh impossible to decommission if they go rogue (there's only a handful of rust hunters with a license to put down a rogue Transient). This is often due to the fact that, within the aforementioned organisations, Transients occupy a sacred place. They are, generally, left to their own devices if stricken with the sentience-inducing virus.

With the creation of Transients, a line dividing the more pragmatic from the more spiritual-minded Arku was clearly drawn. In the following pages, we'd like to then introduce some of these, as well as briefly presenting a couple of the more enigmatic entities that inspired them.

Settler AI

The printing of habitats for humanity has had a short but explosive history in Antumbra. Whereas in the past the whole process of sourcing metals, building compounds, repurposing and putting together construction materials were all done separately, this is now done by large machines that carve and reshape Nibiru to humanity's will. Although this sort of process might be shunned as heresy by some of the oldest cults in Antumbra, for some of the most powerful city-states it has become par for the course, as is taking the next logical step by making the machines think and reason as automatons do.

Granting artificial intelligence to printers has led to a revolution in the colonisation complex; the latest models of what was first known as Printer AIs are designed to deploy deep in Penumbra, fending for itself while deploying an army of service AIs that moulds the landscape of the Skyless World into liveable habitats—thus earning the new nickname of Settler AIs. Many of these models include modules designed to operate in different kinds of locales: some optimised to morph into air purifiers to tackle contaminated vaults, others integrating concepts from the Pleiads and its marvels (such as the platform that built Suruptu within an oil deposit). Only when their job is done do these behemoths allow for humanity to settle in.

In Antumbra, Settler AIs reach even higher levels of functionality, as they disassemble themselves to transport their own limbs through narrow service tunnels, reassembling in the depth of the Outback Domains; a wager that might result in the creation of tomorrow's superpowers—city states meant to give shape to their owners' monstrous ambitions. If anything, they are testimony to the power and success of the Silu class, who've chosen to lay their final claims as overlords of Nibiru in the most spectacular fashion.

The existence of these success stories don't mean that the road to construct Settler AIs was a walk in the park—and like all Silu endeavours, it certainly wasn't clean. Printer AIs were tested for hundreds of cycles near Erra, with technicians constantly perfecting their code to prevent the automatons from building the undesirable. Still, many experiments went awry, and for a few cycles many an invested Silu received reports of malfunctioning prototypes—one instance involving a rogue Settler AI that fled into the dark while printing out a horrifying cry for help in what seemed to be a written form of the machine speech known to certain subset of Vagabonds.

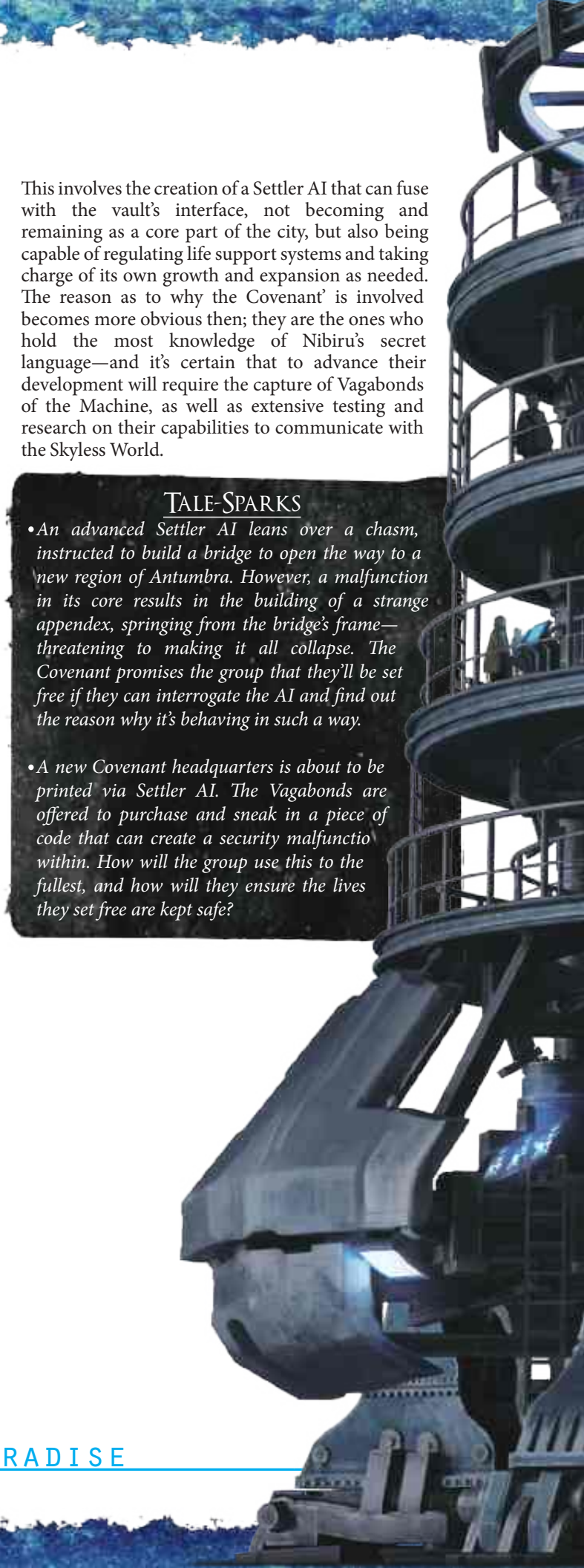
So far, only a limited number of Settler AI's have been operational (which you can count with two hands). While up to now all Settler AIs have been designed to go in, build, and get out, it is rumoured that a large Covenant-backed project is being carried out.

This involves the creation of a Settler AI that can fuse with the vault's interface, not becoming and remaining as a core part of the city, but also being capable of regulating life support systems and taking charge of its own growth and expansion as needed. The reason as to why the Covenant' is involved becomes more obvious then; they are the ones who hold the most knowledge of Nibiru's secret language—and it's certain that to advance their development will require the capture of Vagabonds of the Machine, as well as extensive testing and research on their capabilities to communicate with the Skyless World.

Tale-Sparks

- *An advanced Settler AI leans over a chasm, instructed to build a bridge to open the way to a new region of Antumbra. However, a malfunction in its core results in the building of a strange appendex, springing from the bridge's frame—threatening to making it all collapse. The Covenant promises the group that they'll be set free if they can interrogate the AI and find out the reason why it's behaving in such a way.*

- *A new Covenant headquarters is about to be printed via Settler AI. The Vagabonds are offered to purchase and sneak in a piece of code that can create a security malfunctio within. How will the group use this to the fullest, and how will they ensure the lives they set free are kept safe?*



Altar AI

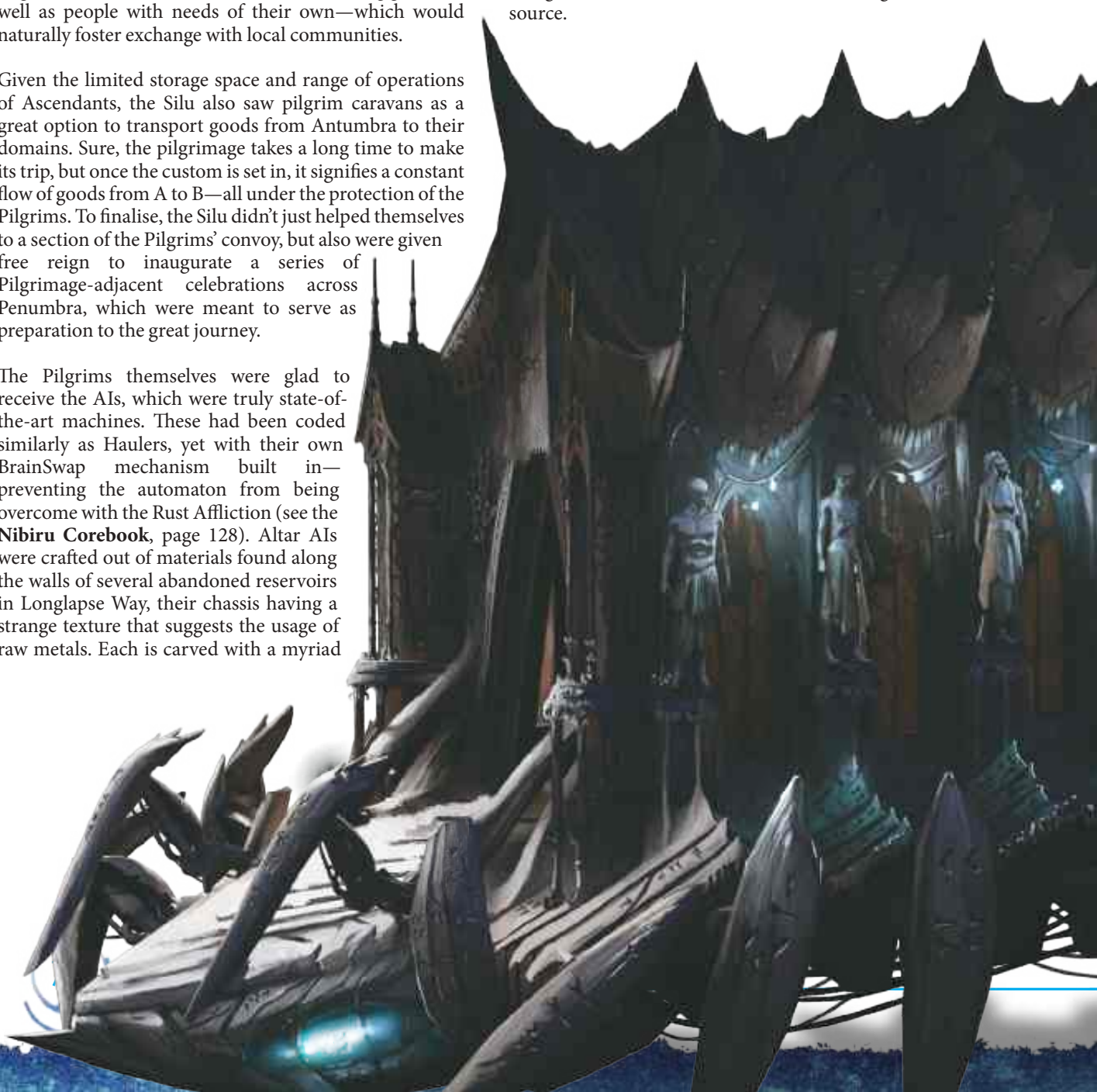
Nothing in the face of the Skyless World brings people together like the Pilgrimage—and there's a lot to it that transcends the purely spiritual. Arguably, transcending borders to experience—along with thousands of strangers—that well known life-changing experience that is travel, should send ripples down a society as closeted as that of the Arku. Although the practise has existed for a long time, it was only with the settling of Penumbra that AIs started to be employed to aid pilgrims in their journey.

Altar AIs were actually conceived by a subset of Assyrian settler conglomerates, all to motivate pilgrims to travel to their domains. The argument was put forth that the "faith of the Pilgrims knows no bounds", and as valid as that might be, it is also true that these caravans bring goods, as well as people with needs of their own—which would naturally foster exchange with local communities.

Given the limited storage space and range of operations of Ascendants, the Silu also saw pilgrim caravans as a great option to transport goods from Antumbra to their domains. Sure, the pilgrimage takes a long time to make its trip, but once the custom is set in, it signifies a constant flow of goods from A to B—all under the protection of the Pilgrims. To finalise, the Silu didn't just helped themselves to a section of the Pilgrims' convoy, but also were given free reign to inaugurate a series of Pilgrimage-adjacent celebrations across Penumbra, which were meant to serve as preparation to the great journey.

The Pilgrims themselves were glad to receive the AIs, which were truly state-of-the-art machines. These had been coded similarly as Haulers, yet with their own BrainSwap mechanism built in—preventing the automaton from being overcome with the Rust Affliction (see the **Nibiru Corebook**, page 128). Altar AIs were crafted out of materials found along the walls of several abandoned reservoirs in Longlapse Way, their chassis having a strange texture that suggests the usage of raw metals. Each is carved with a myriad inscriptions across every inch of their surface, as well as adorned with depictions of the thirteen original Pilgrims. The chapel within holds oral records of previous journeys, serving as a library that travellers can consult upon when in doubt, as well as to satisfy their curiosity on the thoughts of their predecessors.

Altar AIs are often used as mobile speech platforms, their backs boasting an impressive pulpit from where a priest can talk to the congregation behind. While most vehicles and automatons in a Pilgrim caravan receive energy from mobile batteries, Altar AIs have their own coupling mechanism, which can plug into the station itself to consume power. This doesn't just gift them with autonomy; it also grants them a status as holy machines, being able to drink off of Nibiru's nectar straight from the source.



When reaching Antumbra, Altar AIs generally get take away from the Pilgrimage, to be reutilised for the next procession. Though the official line regarding this is that their complex mechanism is too costly to be replaced with every Pilgrimage, it is also rumoured among some of the Enēšu that the thoughts and recordings stored inside are downloaded into the closed compartments of Arku Archivers, to be peered into by those with an interest in keeping Penumbra in chains. This has sparked a conversation among many in the Free Penumbra, of the risks that come with allowing the Pilgrimage to pass through their territory.

Although Pilgrims are still allowed to do so, many community leaders have urged those who wish to partake to refrain from voicing their thoughts within the wandering chapels of the Pilgrims. Surely, future journeys are bound to get more interesting as the social rifts in Nibiru continue to widen up. One can only imagine the role these holy constructs will play then.

Tale-Sparks

- *A group of Enēšu wishes to place a tracking script in an Altar AI mainframe, which should (during the next Pilgrimage) shed some light on the fate of recordings when the AI reaches Antumbra. How will they carry out such a risky operation?*
- *A Dreamlander asks the Vagabonds to help her track down the recordings of one of her links, found in an Altar AI. What unexpected piece of information will the Vagabonds discover upon checking the records?*

Lammasu

A recurring image in many ancient steel carvings across Antumbra, Lammasu are mythic Harbingers that guarded the gateways into Nibiru's beating heart. Although most stories of Lammasu encounters talk about them as welcoming, gentle giants, awaiting for Pilgrims in order to guide them through their final journey into the Core, more recent recounts paint a much darker picture.

Lammasu protect whatever it is Nibiru deems of great value. This can be anything, from the more obvious central facilities (**Nibiru Corebook, p. 51**) to abandoned vaults deep in the station and, in some exceedingly rare occasions, certain individuals. They'll almost always find you first, with little in the way of warning, and generally with the purpose of dispatching whatever they deem a menace. Although their basic purpose is clear, their directives (essentially, the criteria they use to determine why something needs to be protected) are not—this being the main reason as to why they are classed as Harbingers.

These entities are rightfully built for their job: towering over humans with their 12 metres of height, yet moving with unnerving grace and speed, they're sure to inspire fear on anyone they run into. Their agility stems from their hollow carapace and steelweave sinews, which can grow and harden as per the entity's wishes—making them able to operate throughout the entirety of the Skyless World—sightings of heavily built Lammasu have been reported in places as far as the Archaean Sorrows.

Their strange nature doesn't stop at that though: Lammasu have a very special, secret history that ties them to Vagabonds. It's been whispered, since the arrival of the first amnesiacs at the station, that Lammasu sometimes came into the aid of Vagabonds in dire times—going as far as giving them a place to hide within their hollowed-out insides. However, it is also known among learned amnesiacs that encounters of this kind almost always signify the complete loss of one's past memories. The specifics of how that happens are unclear, but it's good praxis to try to avoid or escape these entities if one wishes to keep their hard-earned recollections intact.

The Download

Whenever the group encounters a Lammasu, if they are in great danger or in a grave condition, the Harbinger will attempt to seize them and store them within their interior. For this end, their signature tool is a powerful flash of light they can emit from their head—which renders those who see it blind for about thirty seconds. The Lammasu then kneels before their prey, their rib cage opening up to swallow them up. In their interior, swarming, slithering cables seek for the prey's flesh, restraining its movements and eventually plugging its medulla to the Lammasu's nervous system. When this happens, the captured Vagabond will make a Special Roll (one dice). The result will indicate how many Journal Pages worth of Memories (8 each) the Lammasu will download to their frame—meaning those Memories and their associated effects, as well as any Revelations tied to the pages, will be lost.

However, if the roll results in a result of 4, the Vagabond's stream of thought will push into the entity's frame—hijacking its native code and taking control of the body. The Vagabond will not be able to leave, yet they will be in full control of the Lammasu. They'll be able to understand normal speech, and they'll have the capability of using gestures to convey simple responses. However, to communicate more complex ideas, they're only tool will be the cables found within the Lammasu, which the inhabiting Vagabond can trigger by spending a single Memory or Influence Point. These cables will plug into one or several Vagabonds, and transmit the immediate thoughts of the embedded amnesiac.

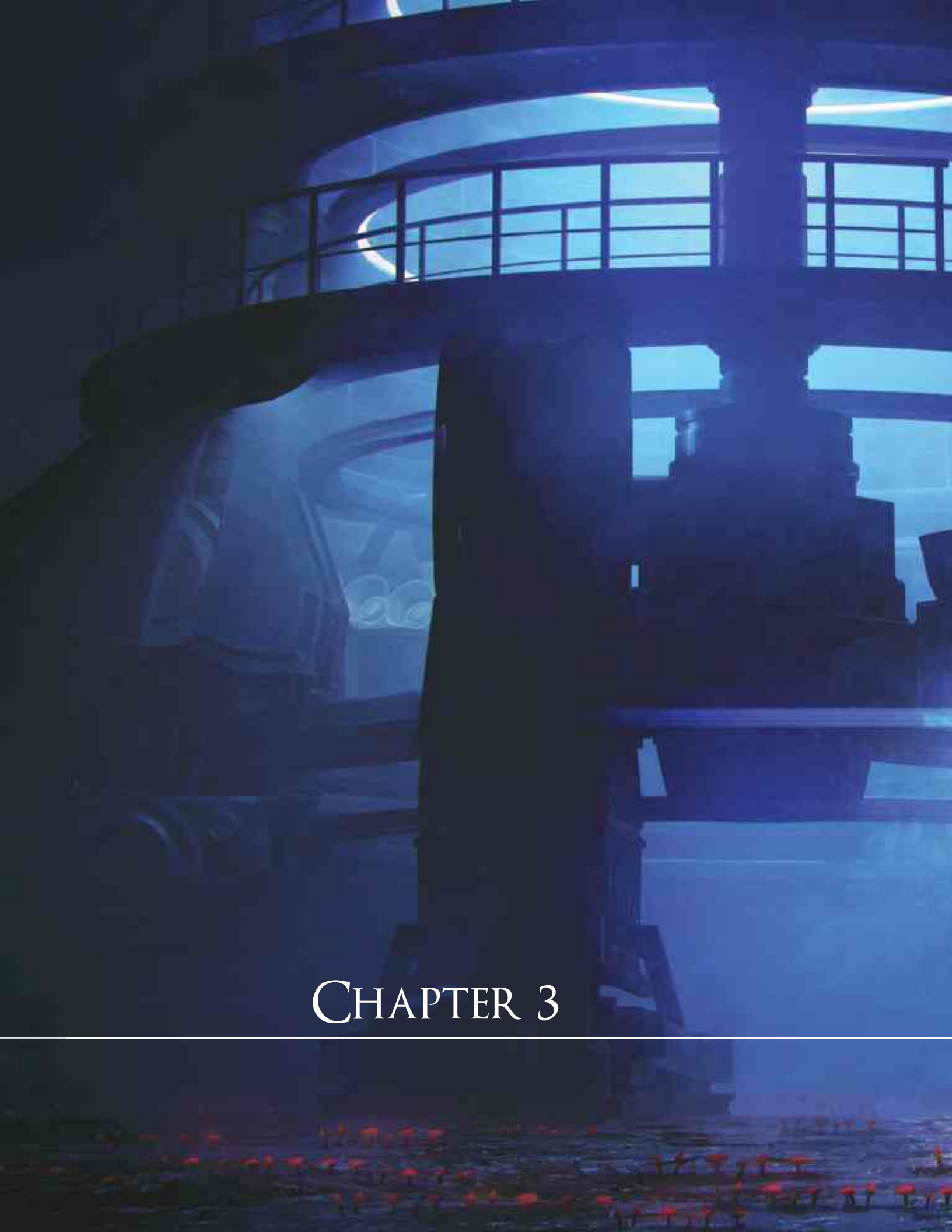
Should the Vagabond wish to leave the Lammasu, they'll need to sacrifice all their Journal Pages. A full cycle after, the Lammasu will develop a biomechanical womb from which the Vagabond will surface, their memories lost, yet their bodies once again free, and fully healed.

Action Types for Lammasu include:
For running: 9 Dice
For combat purposes, as well as catching prey: 8 Dice

Tale-Sparks

- *A Dreadlander has found their surfacing recollections intolerable, and after falling to despair, one of their friends decides to contact the group and make a request: take their friend deep into Nibiru's entrail, with the hopes of finding a Lammasu that can clear the slate for the tormented amnesiac. Where exactly will they go?*

- *One of the outback domains has lost access to the water supply—all signs indicating a malfunction in the filtering system. Locating the corresponding control station would have been nigh impossible, if it weren't for the finding of a trail of massive footprints across an old, abandoned hallway. What will the group find at the end of the road?*



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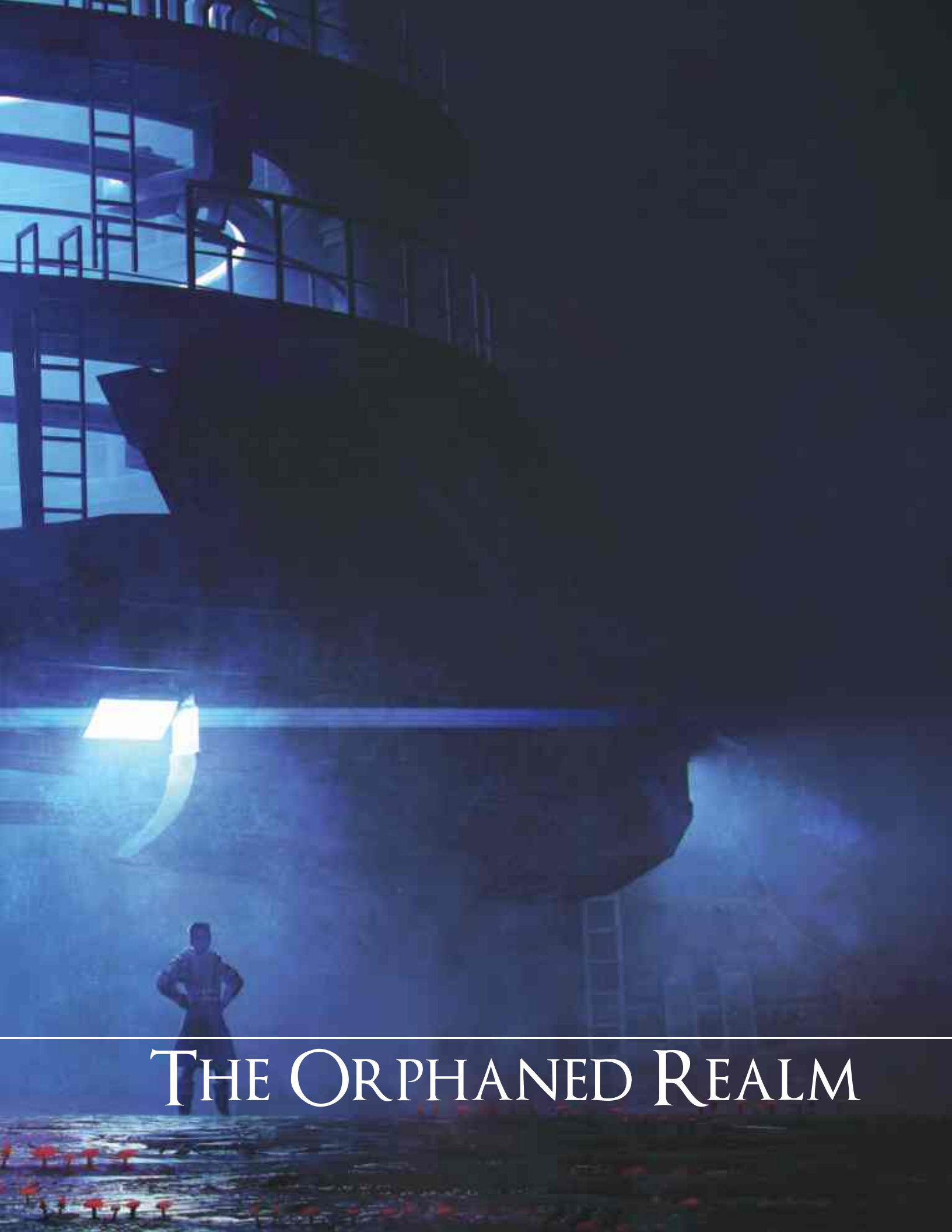

The Orphaned Realm

Wayward Children

What became of the Shepherd after its departure? Though many have theorised about this, truth is that the myth has occluded the real story of what came down in that distant past—a history not of unanimous obedience to the Shepherd's paternal figure, but of rebellion and division. Past a dozen layered walls of steel and circuit, and following whispers old as humanity's infancy, the answers and consequences of this hidden twist take shape—as we reach the final resting place of Ashur's legendary caretaker—, the Orphaned Realm, also known as **Xanadu**.

Right after the creature's departure, a split in the Assyrian clergy resulted in a group of people stepping out of the gates and chasing after their progenitor. These were the Departed, and though they failed to reunite with the Shepherd, their vagrant kingdom came to find—after many cycles of aimless wandering—a holy conduit: A piece of tissue, of unknown composition, seemingly left behind by the Shepherd.

Astounded, they quickly realised that the stranded organ was still functional, fuelled by a series of power lines plugged into its base. As it grew, it encircled the group, embracing them, providing them safe haven in evocation of a lingering, caring will; vestiges of a paternal instinct, intent on keeping their orphaned brood safe from harm.

The Living City

Xanadu, as the strange object was named, elicited great fascination in its protegees. The fact that it had awaken upon their arrival and the way it behaved inspired thinkers among the Departed, to find the right way to communicate with it. They soon discovered coursing veins made of soft alloy, wrapping around pulsating sub-organs. From cavernous wind chambers, populated with tensed appendages akin to vocal chords, to a luminous membrane behind of which danced shadowy, human-like silhouettes, all of these organs had hidden purposes that begged to be deciphered. All in all though, most of the Departed agreed that Xanadu's "intent" was on caring for them. In turn, sage Dwura proposed mutual nurturing, caring for Xanadu in return and sharing their vault with it.

As the cycles went on, they started to learn of how Xanadu interfaced with the station. They read flickering lights as a sign of hunger—meaning the Departed would set off to gather energy from an old, untapped outlet. They discovered sections of dead tissue and understood the need to carve out dead skin overgrowth when found, as well as to feed the city with organic refuse so it would retain a healthy look throughout. A small outpost, named after the sage Dwura, was founded there—thus becoming Xanadu's primary lifeline.

Goriel's Creation

While search parties scrambled to find new power sources for Xanadu, an ingenuous artisan from the ancient city of Ankuwa, named Goriel, delved into the halls to the north of the settlement, disappearing behind the decaying walls with a set of tools at hand. A few lapses later, they emerged carrying a myriad of different utensils and crafts, carved in a beautiful pale grey texture made out of Xanadu's dead tissue. Immediately, Goriel's discovery earned them joyous praise—as well as a considerable number of followers. Together, they gleefully set out to perfect Xanadu's first traditional craft, the results of which are a staple in all homes throughout the orphaned realm.

This event sparked new debates on the importance of learning about Xanadu's biology. The orphans decided thus to attempt communication, using long, electrified needles to stimulate nervous nodes beneath the city's tissue in order to guide its growth. They experimented with long sections of tissue, skin and muscle, discovering the many ways in which Xanadu's body interacted with other lifeforms and how it reacted to a variety of different stimuli. Eventually, they were able to mould Xanadu's structure at will—as well as to interpret its subtle yet consistent ways of communication.

Urban Anatomy

When talking about Xanadu's anatomy, the sages defined three sections of Xanadu that everyone considers the most important: the Heart, where energy is transformed and most core organs are found, the Womb, which is the oldest section of Xanadu and serves as a place of reflection and ritual, and the Fingers, which grow to accommodate everyone, and are open for anyone to shape as they see fit.

The Heart is where most of the core organs of Xanadu can be found. Massive resistor appendices and energy storage organs allow the city to connect and utilise even the largest of Nibiru's powerlines, as well as to disassemble and process not just batteries but pretty much any kind of chemical and organic waste, producing nutrients that aid the growth of new homes and spaces. The Heart also possesses a great spiritual significance—there's a strong imagery in local art, of the Shepherd "leaving their heart behind" for their people, as well as of life flowing outwards from it and being granted to humans.

The Womb is an overgrown amniotic sac, within which humanoid silhouettes can be seen swimming in beautiful patterns. It's an eerie sight, significative enough for the Xanadu council to spend long hours coming up with interpretations for the strange show. The council is housed in an ossified chamber that surrounds the membranous walls, where they give names to the silhouettes, and inscribe their otherworldly dance in a series of bone marrow plaques for everyone to see. The Womb is believed by some to be the place of origin of humanity, and as such it holds a lot of meaning for those who subscribe to beliefs adjacent to the Birther tradition.

The Fingers extend from the base of the Heart towards the vault's edges, measuring about six hundred metres in radius. The orphaned realm's history is inscribed in their architecture: at the root, you can see its shapes contort to tell the tale of first contact, when Xanadu first embraced the newcomers and protected them from the outside world. Their form changes as newer sections roll in, signs of the Departed's learnings on shaping Xanadu. Modern outgrowth turns orderly and systematic, identical contours marking a spike in high modernist approaches to city building, only to flow more naturally and shape into the more organic-looking housing limbs of today.

Giving and Taking

Over the ages, the Departed have developed a relationship with Xanadu that is propped up by a complex, rich gift economy. The citizens are ever observant of the city's shifting skin tones, mapping out cyclical calendars that help determine what is it that Xanadu wants. Accordingly,

offerings are laid before the city's organs, services performed on Xanadu in communal shows of care. Balms are produced to welcome the time of skin shedding, turning dead tissue into prime matter, while milk and black fungi paste, high on protein, are supplied during the brighter cycles to foster growth. Ritual, art and play are a single thing; a shared experience with Xanadu, as well as a service to everyone's well being.

The city's offerings in return are always plentiful; some of its branching tendrils are extremely rich in nutrients, facilitating domestic fungiculture. The process involves puncturing Xanadu's skin to sow spores, thereby sparing the Departed from having to track down specific conditions of humidity, light, and amperage for fungi.

The Departed have a city council, though its members aren't perceived as above or below everyone else. The people's well being and happiness doesn't depend on council pronouncements, and at the macro level they cannot directly speak for the whole—unlike the council members of Antumbra, who rise through the ranks of guild hierarchies. Whilst difficult situations call for time out in order to consult the Womb, make interpretations, and convey them to the people, this doesn't mean that said interpretations result in action. Council members are excluded from final debates and shows of hands—their input oft not needed nor wanted.

What Truly Counts

One interesting aspect of the show of hands is that there is never an exact count of this many people being against that particular motion. All these decisions are made easier due to the Departed seeing themselves as a community of neighbours. Counting votes is a bit ridiculous when one can just—if particularly bothered by a specific outcome—, air their discontent in front of everyone else. Rather than reaching unanimous agreement, the process is about balancing disagreement and then addressing particular cases of deep, intolerable discontent.

Tale-Sparks

- *Strange green markings are spreading out from the seventh Finger inwards, leaving dead tissue in their wake. The council asks the group for help: they are tasked to contact a physician in Nineveh that could help save the city in time. How will the group convince this physician, who doesn't even know of Xanadu's existence?*

- *The council's last interpretations led them to the Vagabonds' specific names and locations. They are asked to have an audience with the silhouettes: What's in store for them, that it required such a specific, urgent call for attention?*

Double Trouble

It doesn't matter how well tucked within Nibiru's entrails the Orphaned Realm was; sooner or later, word would get out and reach the larger Antumbran community. The first ones to know were the Silu, who lobbied Archaean council members to keep it all under wraps—lest the reveal provoke a sudden influx of independent entrepreneurs rushing in to make bank on new territories. Unfortunately for them, knowledge spilled quick into the popular sphere—cover up scandals resulting in mass defections, as council members immolated themselves to save Silu face. Rumours spread like wildfire, and in the wake of political upheaval, a number of individuals decided to fact-check on their own—bypassing state checkpoints to contact the Departed, and then relaying information about the new worlds below Charchemish.

Immediately after, a group of Silu reached the edges of the Orphaned Realm, intent on establishing contact with the Departed and to deploy an envoy in Xanadu. When they were found out by the council at Charchemish, they claimed that they had introduced themselves as the Archaean Advance—playing their hand early on and forcing the Archaean council to negotiate, granting their right to continue operations. Enki's Covenant sided with them, taking their slice of the pie by building a new outpost in the Advance. Some of the Silu involved were replaced by officials from the Archaean government, and soon enough this jumbled up Arku coalition was found knocking on the gates of Xanadu, intent on seeing what was to be found behind.

The **Archaean Advance** was greeted with cordiality, yet they were not allowed to deploy their envoy. Some say that the Departed were being advised by a Vagabond, others by a group of Enēšu intent on preventing cooperation between Antumbra and the realm. What is known is that the Archaean Advance is now dedicated to scouring through the immediacies of the realm, making readings and conducting as much research as they can without actually stepping into the vault of Xanadu.

Following in their footsteps, yet undiscovered by the Archaean envoys, a **Birther Congregation** reached the edge of the realm by the tunnels below the vault, emerging to find before them a miracle in the flesh. Birthers, who believe that humanity originated in the womb of the Shepherd, were much better received by the Departed, allowing them to camp nearby and make regular trips to pray at the feet of the Womb. Regularly they've met with the council of sages to discuss matters of philosophy and history, and can be said to be the closest friends to the people of Xanadu at the moment—who have vouched to protect the persecuted faithful from any trespassers intent on harming them.

Tale-Sparks

- *A fellow amnesiac is suffering from an illness that necessitates a complex procedure in order to be treated. Since they are not registered citizens in their city-state, they cannot get medical attention. Delirious, they speak of a recent remembrance of a strange place—memories that can lead the group to Xanadu in order to heal them. Can they trust their friend's visions? And how will they go about reaching their destination?*

- *An Arku ban on Krajj supplies to Penumbra means bad news to fringe Enēšu communities, unless they can source another provider. The vagabonds can mediate between Xanadu and the peoples of Penumbra, yet… what are the risks for the orphans, and what will they want in return?*

Finally, there's the matter of the **Enēšu Encampment**, which came about after spies in the Archaean high echelons passed on the news to groups in Free Penumbra. Although they have come into touch with the Departed, the Enēšu have mostly been trying to cut short the attempts, by the Archaean Advance, to sneak in and extract information from the branching service tunnels that surround the vault of Xanadu. Their interest lies in establishing ties of cooperation with the settlement, as well as preventing the Arku from putting the orphaned realm at risk.

Amidst all of this, Vagabonds have found in the realm a haven they can, at least temporary, rely on when traversing the Outer Reaches. With the shadow of avarice encroaching in on the settlement, what the future will bring for this beacon of light is up to you to decide…

Playing in Xanadu

There are several ideas that should come to mind when thinking about playing a game tied to Xanadu. First, one should think about the **Initial Contact**. Xanadu is unlike any other place in Nibiru; it's a living, functional missing link between human ideas of technology and nature. It's a place where the lines between the two blur completely, and in a majestic, terrifying manner at that. If you are the Narrator, you ought to take inspiration from the text and sights presented here and make that initial contact one that conveys these ideas.

The city can be a haven to your group, provided you **Build Trust**. Doing that will take effort, effort that is easy fodder for adventure. What does that adventure look like? Well, one need only think of what the Departed may find useful about the Vagabonds' presence. The amnesiacs are travelled people, who are used to dealing with different ethnic groups and communities. Maybe the Vagabonds are asked to settle a dispute between the city and one of the communities in the Outback Domains, or to convince a Silu entrepreneur to let go of a particular piece of land. The Xanadu surroundings are largely unexplored, so there's a lot one can come up with here.

Once settled, Xanadu can become the perfect **Central Hub**. For better or worse, the city has become a nexus where different people converge. You got Arku contingents at the Advance, autonomous groups at the Enēšu Encampment, exiles at the Birther Congregation, as well as hundreds of communities across the Outback Domains—each of them as varied as they can be. If the Vagabonds have travelled the Skyless World prior to arriving at Xanadu, they might be able to pull favours and connect story lines thanks to their ties with these communities.

Ultimately, if your group stays in Xanadu, **Escalation** is to be expected. One or several of the local outposts surrounding Xanadu will fall out of favour for one reason or another, and your group will inevitably face an existential threat—whether from the outsiders or from the Departed themselves. Their allegiances and ethical grounds will be tested! If you are the Narrator, it's good to consider the ideological differences that might have developed along the way among your group, and how the final conflict can create drama from those differences.

Storytelling Lessons
The Missing Link

The city of Xanadu is meant to be the knot that ties *Nibiru's* themes of nature and artificiality together. This is central to describing the vistas and daily life of the Orphaned Realm, and what things the Vagabonds might witness that embody this conjunction. Here's a couple of examples to plug:

- ***Cables that expand and contract like they're breathing.***

- ***Machine surfaces with a steel-like sheen, yet stained in a manner that suggests sickness—as if the metal itself was infected.***

- ***A generator that hums in scattershot patterns, producing a sound that resembles humane lamentations, yet in tones that are deeply uncanny.***

- ***Trasluscent flesh that reveal electric pulsations, a ring of skin with several lights that seem to light up progressively, as if tracking some kind of countdown.***

- ***An arm-like limb that moves to puncture a large, membrane—preparing it for fungiculture. It does so in a robotic, rigid movement pattern that seems fully automated.***

- ***A black carapace that anyone would deem organic, yet produces a thoroughly metallic sound when hit.***

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The Heart

Xanadu's living core, the Heart consists of massive energy storage organs, around of which is a ossified carapace carved with the offices of the council of the Departed. Below, a series of appendages burrow under the vault's plaques, frantically seeking for power sources—sustained by workers hauling batteries to and from Outpost Dwura.

The Womb

Human silhouettes dance within an amniotic fluid reservoir, contained by a translucent membrane, kept in watch by the sages in search for hints of Xanadu's thoughts and worries. Records of the shadows' otherworldly choreography, their given names, as well as how they seem to surface to eventually disappear as time goes by, are kept in the immediacies—all in hopes to further understand the structure's purpose.

Crown Marrow

Bone-like structures covered in strange alloys protrude towards the vault's ceilings, protecting the city's innards and offering hollow cavities where the town's produce and food reserves are kept. The Crown Marrow has a series of delicate organs at the base that seem to communicate with the station in mysterious ways.

Shepherd's Plaza

Surrounded by the Crown Marrow's pillars, Shepherd's Plaza is Xanadu's premier gathering spot. Here is where most meet ups happen, as well as public shows of hands. It's also the main access point to the tunnels below Xanadu, where the batteries that keep the city alive are fed to the Heart.

Seni's Organ

Named after the sage that discovered its function, this is a massive resonance chamber where a low hum can be heard—theorised to be a vestigial organ that would enable Xanadu to produce sounds. It's structure is used to convey messages to the whole settlement, as well as a place to practise the arts.

The Roots

Tissue growth in the form of thousands of thin-skinned limbs, through which one can see several exposed terminations conducting electricity. The Roots are naturally gifted to harvest a myriad different fungi varieties, and extend over several hundred metres to provide the Departure with food aplenty.

The Fingers

Xanadu's ever-growing expanse of engineered limbs and appendices, designed to house its inhabitants and opening new crevices, sinew-bridges and cavities designed for all the needs of the Departed. The fingers are a bio engineering marvel, its most recent design pattern a result of hundreds of cycles of continued interaction between the people and the city.

The Heart

Amidst columns of twisting sinew and hollow bone, one may look up into the beating heart of an organic city—dedicated to safekeeping the life of several thousands of souls. The Heart is meant to transport nutrients across the entirety of Xanadu, ensuring that the city grows as desired, and transforming the surface of the vault by decomposing metals and rearranging matter—making it the prime motor of construction in the Orphaned Realm. The Heart's importance make it so that the Departed keep many a vigilant eye around its periphery; a small army of two-person teams monitoring the massive ventricles that pulse in unison. They make sure the rhythm is steady and report any anomalies they may detect.

Why go There

The processes at work in the Heart can, with some imagination, show how Nibiru's steel shell could become the prime matter that allows humanity ***to create a self-sustaining home***. Studying its structure and the processes that recompose the structure of Nibiru into this strange organ could be key to making lives easier for the peoples of Penumbra and beyond.

As the bastion of the Heartguard, anyone who wishes t***o protect Xanadu from outside threats*** would do well to visit this place. The guards also often assist those who wish ***to traverse the Xanadu immediacies***, providing information and sometimes escort through the depths of the Antumbran edge.

The office of the Xanadu council is found deep within the bone cavities overlooking the Heart's main valves, a series of protuberances serving as a staircase leading to ossified chambers. ***To bring matters to the town's attention***, one needs to speak with the council members, who will listen to anyone who comes in with good intentions.

Who to Meet

Once an estranged soul found by the Departed at death's doorstep, ***Shnina*** is now an esteemed member of the community, dedicated to researching the Heart's outer roots. These terminations extend over what she believes are hundreds of kilometres of tunnels, carrying information about Nibiru to the settlements' marrow. She is a kind soul that will always take the chance to talk to outsiders, wishing to learn more about how other people regard Nibiru as a whole.

Like most military-minded men, ***Uras*** is always looking for a chance to escalate issues into increasingly violent solutions. He leads a group within the Heartguard that believes the best way to protect Xanadu is to scare off the communities that have been installed in the settlement's immediacies. Although some of his paranoia could be justified given his knowledge of the Arku's modus operandi, it's arguable that his intent will make things better for the Departed. Time will tell…

A friendly face among the city council, ***Zamar*** is a Vagabond of the Dreadlands, who saw his Nightmare guide him through the Outback Domains into the orphaned realm many cycles ago, eventually settling in and aiding the council to handle interactions with the nearby encampments. He lives near the Heart, claiming that the pulse he can feel makes it easier for him to sleep, prevents bad dreams, and has given him more clarity to figure out his troubled remembrances. This one might indeed prove to be an ally to the protagonists.

Tale-Sparks

- *Upon hearing of the Vagabonds' arrival to Xanadu, Shnina wishes to enlist them on a research project, intending for them to seek for a particular energy reading while they journey through the Skyless World. This reading could give her clues to the full extent of Xanadu's neural network. What secrets will be unveiled, particularly with regards to the Vagabonds of the Womb?*

- *An operative from the Archaean advance intends to sneak in and take a tissue sample from the Heart. One of the Vagabonds sees them during a close-o-lapse walk, while everyone sleeps. Will they be able to stop them? What will the consequences be, and how will the settlement react to the event?*

The Womb

Given that almost everything in Xanadu seems to parody some sort of function of life, the existence of the womb and its unknown purpose was bound to capture the imagination of the Departed. While it is know that the strange shadows that inhabit within are indeed gestating beings, their true nature, as well as the reason why they seem to show up and eventually disappear as the cycles go by, is still a mystery—and the main driver for many a sage's interpretation, speculation, and theorising. Furthermore, a series of tubes and organelles that stem from it seem to dive deep into the ceiling of the vault, meaning that there is indeed something out there, tied to the womb's functions, the full extent of which is yet to be discovered.

Why go There

If one is to believe Birther claims, the Womb could hide the key to ***understanding the origin of humanity*** in Nibiru, or at least, its origin during the current flicker (see **Corebook, page 16**). The proponents of these theories see the Womb as the vessel by which humanity arrived to Antumbra, allowing it to brave the darkness and subsist during the primordial lapses in amniotic state. This is based partly on the existence of what seems to be vestigial limbs at the base of the organ, that throughout time have withered and atrophied. Yet that proposition raises many more questions—with no one to provide conclusive answers.

Whether one believes the sages or not, it is worthy of consideration that their communication with the Womb has always yielded usable results. In the same vein, even the skeptics who wish to ***communicate with Xanadu*** might find it worthwhile to pay it a visit. Interpreting the shadow's movement might give them clues about their past lives and insight about their current situation, more so if the silhouettes react in any sort of unusual manner when in the presence of the protagonists!

If one were ***to consult the records*** stored at the Womb's peripheral chambers, one might be able to find known patterns, imagery and tales that could resonate with dormant echoes of the distant past, evoking memories and shedding light on the events that were happening in the rest of the Skyless World at the time of recording. Even with that, the way in which the shadows seem to tell tales of the past seem to take very peculiar points of view, and so depending on your story's focus this might provide information on how a particular person, AI, or anything able to store memories could have been living during particular times. Use this resource for your stories wisely!

Who to Meet

Iwalim is a Vagabond of the Womb—and how fitting then, for them to spend their lapses annotating the movements of the shadows, and theorising on their nature. Their proposition is simple: Nibiru's powerlines are not just meant to provide power, but also to transport information to other neural centres in the vein of the Womb. Iwalim thinks that the shadows found within are "template amnesiacs", recipients of this information, who are either released into the world or recycled as times goes by. Needless to say, Iwalim will have an interest in working with the group to find further proof for their theory.

As an envoy from the Birther Congregation, ***Barsawme*** occupies a highly privileged position as monitor of the Womb. Most of her time is spent in the archives, scouring the sages' earliest records in search for clues to the location of a metal slab from time immemorial. This slab is said to have a foot print of the Womb's atrophied limbs—opening up the chance to prove the Birther's hypothesis.

Hormzud is one of the oldest sages of Xanadu, a philosopher that has seen several generations of Departed pass by, full of insight and wisdom about their people and the world at large. They are well known in town for studying how the cycles of Nibiru harmonize with the dance of the shadows, and for being proponents of a theory that speaks of fading light and the creeping decay of the Skyless World at large. This theory is backed by depictions of violence and scarcity, shown through the shadow dance and interpreted by the council as grim augurs. They are always looking to seize information on life in Umbra and beyond, intent on adding proof to their claims that the world's shutdown is at hand.

Storytelling Lessons
Harbingers of the End

Because of how earth-shattering the Revelations brought by Xanadu might prove to be, with all the potential insights they hold regarding the Skyless World, the Orphaned Realm is an ideal place to set the stage for your game's final act, or at least, a staging ground for the story's final revelation. It's a place that can be utilised to make big reveals about Nibiru, giving the group the clarity necessary to put their objectives in sight.

Maybe it's about the Womb conveying to them the last resting place of a dead Vagabond, whose withering memories are key to solving the mystery they're after. Maybe it's about them finding prophecies of the world's shutdown to be true, and seizing the evidence necessary to convince the people to find a solution together with Xanadu. Maybe it's about solidifying an alliance that might help the Enēšu break away from their masters. These pages should inspire you to think about the way the settlement will provide answers in times of uncertainty!

There's plenty of turmoil to be had, what with multiple conflicting interests knocking at the vault's doors—as well as residing within. Think of how other actors in the story might want to make use of the secrets found in Xanadu, and you'll soon come up with plenty of story seeds to bring drama into your game.

Crown Marrow

While the Heart shapes Xanadu's cityscape, the Crown Marrow branches outwards, interfacing with the Skyless World as a sort of control node in a plethora of different ways. Not just that: the crown marrow produces Xanadu's hormones, as well as being the city's main lymphoid organ, where most immune system cells are produced.

Wander its immediacies, and you'll find halls dedicated to treating almost any kind of ailment, as well as cultivated masses of bone overgrowth made to be carved into tools and artworks. Past its walls, you can find folk study the connections between the marrow and Xanadu's immediacies, measuring how the city exerts control over the region's air, water, and energy supply, as well as over external facilities, hallway gate points, etc.

Why go There

There's an uncanny resemblance between the organic composition of the crown marrow and lymphatic system, meaning that the city's immune system could work ***to cure human-borne ailments***. This is probably Xanadu's most

miraculous facet; a power that poses a lot of questions on the responsibility of the Departed on sharing the city's blessings with the rest of the Skyless World.

A large part of the bone marrow's overgrowth, meant to keep safe the organs found inside, has been carved and repurposed by the Departed since the start. Along the base of the marrow one can actually find artisans giving away their creations, and so it's definitely a place to go ***to procure tools.*** The crown's artists will generally let go of any of their pieces, particularly if the need is great and if it gives them an excuse to have an interesting conversation.

Past the bone overgrowth, the crown marrow pierces through the vault's floorplaques, with thousands of nervous terminations coiling around the powerlines below. In this case though, rather than doing so to extract power, Xanadu links up with Nibiru to extract information and issue commands: ***to control air, water, and power flow as well a myriad of facilities and functions of the station across the region.*** The Departed know how to take over to an extent, using clamping poles to interrupt power flow and manipulating the binary language at work—providing them with an ace up their sleeve if they're ever in need to defend their territory.

Who to Meet

Ahmoud is one of the loudest proponents of revealing the existence of the orphaned realm to the rest of the Skyless World. They deem it their moral obligation to share the miraculous properties of marrow fluid with the rest of Nibiru, and though they would never infringe upon the Departed's rule by consent, they still do seek out every chance they have to bring in someone from outside, and to have them talk about the kind of terrifying ailments the use of marrow fluid could heal.

Though there's plenty of wondrous ideas that have taken form through bone carving, ***Irina's*** are likely to be some of the most interesting to travelling Vagabonds. She's dedicated to producing a wide variety of tools designed to traverse the entrails of Nibiru, from shock-proof walking sticks to pocket fungi farms, from hunting spears to cable cutters, everything she creates will come in handy if one is planning on taking a trip throughout the darkest reaches of the Skyless World. In exchange, she only asks for some sort of original creation in return; its the intention that counts, not the skill!

In a dark, humid pocket below ground, ***Bartulme*** examines a constant stream of data in search for clues. They are in charge of researching and recording information on the crown marrow's interfacing capabilities, coordinating task teams and running experiments across the region. Bartulme has uses aplenty for wanderers, and might offer use of the marrow's very interfacing power in exchange for help with doing field tests out in the black.

Tale-Sparks

- *The image of a strange figure wandering across burning halls surface into the minds of the Vagabonds. The locale's description matches that of an automated metal foundry, found 5 miles beneath the vault of Xanadu. Coincidentally, Bartulme had just raised a proposal to study that facility's response to Xanadu's signal. With a common goal in mind, the group sets out to investigate. What will they find once they arrive?*

- *A plague ravages through the southern city-states of Antumbra, and so it is that a friend of the Vagabonds (knowing of their diligence, compassion and skill) contacts them, revealing the existence of Xanadu, and begging for them to assist Ahmoud's efforts in the city of the Departed. Who among the Arku will try to stop them, and why?*

Shepherd's Plaza

Surrounded by bone pillars, under the shadow of the Crown Marrow, Shepherd's Plaza is the main gathering spot for the Departed, the centre of social and political life in Xanadu. Most decisions are made in here, with the city council managing the citizen's assembly timetable, and the plaza is big enough to accommodate a considerable chunk of Xanadu's population. At the plaza, there's communal eateries, as well as multipurpose sectors meant to help organise parties venturing into the Outback Domains.

Why go There

Any group of Vagabonds arriving at Xanadu is expected to show commitment, and proof that they can be trusted with. Task leaders, supply runners and other volunteers often seek for aid at the plaza; from missions deep below the city to repair damaged power lines, to surveying expeditions to report on the region's wildlife—this is the place one goes to ***to set off and explore the Outback Domains.*** If in the process you get to solidify your reputation with the Departed, so much the better!

If you are looking ***to eat to your heart's content***, the plaza is the place to be. All of the home-grown delicacies and traditional dishes of the Departed can be tasted here, with early risers getting the best picks (so make sure to get there in time!). Travellers can also ask for pre-made lunch packs, depending on how far they are venturing out for.

Decisions on political matters in Xanadu are everyone's business, and when everylapse voting comes into play, it doesn't matter if you are a transient: if you are living in the city currently, you have a voice in its affairs. While individuals in your group might not have a large proportional impact in the overall vote, a particularly good speech or a specific plight for aid might provide the spark ***to enact change in the city***—independently of where you come from!

Who to Meet

Working alongside a group of volunteer handyfolk, ***Cheikho*** is responsible for overseeing the crown marrow's healthy growth, examining the foundations from below at Shepherd's Plaza. They are known for employing travellers heading into the Outback Domains, and putting up a good word for them, given their constant need for organic compounds found deep in the wild. Those compounds are then used to make the guides and cables used to ensure the crown marrow grows in the desired way—making sure everything that's built above it retains its balance.

Ninson is one of the people in charge of hearing requests from the citizens and taking them to the communal assembly of the city. When Vagabonds are in need of aid of any kind, specifically from the city and their community at large, they are the ones to talk to. Ninson will usually try to assist the group and guide them through the many volunteer groups operating at the plaza, to see if any of them can assist them before taking matters to the rest of the people. However, if the decision to assist the group could present issues of ethics, then Ninson will undoubtedly pass a motion for vote—meaning that part of the group's mission will involve convincing folk of the virtue of their task.

Some of the earliest treatises between Xanadu and the outside world were struck with free communities living near the Torus Corridor; associations whereby the Departed supplied food and components in time of need, in order to access delicacies and craftsmanship from Penumbra. ***Khannah*** is a fellow Vagabond, in charge of some of these supply runs, specifically aimed to help groups of amnesiacs seeking for refuge near the Torus. They are a kind soul with a lot of information to share for those Vagabonds who earn her trust—specially important if you want to seek out for these amnesiacs yourselves.

Tale-Sparks

- *During one of the celebrations of the city's foundation, the plaza turns into an horror show as people realise the food has been contaminated. Quickly, rumours spread of the Vagabonds' culpability, and the group is compelled to investigate before the general assembly gathers to discuss and decide upon the allegations. Who has done this, and why would they try to frame the amnesiacs?*

- *An assembly is called to decide on how to handle the request for an Enki's Covenant Nexus to access the city. Immediately, the Vagabonds are in need to hatch a counterargument for allowing them in. It seems a prominent member of the community is pushing for it: How can they offer hard proof of the organisation's true intentions?*

Seni's Organ

Although not much is known about the way the Shepherd communicated with humans, it's always been a curious thing for historians to see how many tales and recounts of the progenitor's singing voice and their hum there seems to be. Far from being a mindless automaton, it sounds like the Shepherd enjoyed themselves quite a bit by jamming, and that same urge seems to have been replicated in Xanadu's DNA through Seni's Organ.

Every once in a while, the city redirects air flow into the Organ's cavernous depths, humming strange tunes to the enjoyment (and sometimes annoyance) of the Departed. Many of those who pursue music as an art form feel like the Organ is their place to be: the city has grown halls within it with almost perfect acoustics, and usually joins with whomever is willing to jam along. During these sessions, musicians usually signal the city in a variety of ways on the sort of mood they're going for, tempo, etc. While visiting philosophers might want to gauge some deep meaning from these interactions, the Departed usually say that the city generally just wants to talk music and play along with its citizens, and that there really is no deeper meaning to its melodies.

Why go There

Although the Womb is generally where one goes to hear what Xanadu says to humanity, there's a lot of merit to taking some time to listen ***to the city's underlying feelings.*** There's plenty of reason to assume that there are things the city keeps to themselves, but that ultimately surface in their music, and so usually—during times of turmoil, when the Womb's interpretations make little sense—people have tried to listen closely and to try understand the city's worries and fears.

It is out of the question that those wanting ***to play music*** should head over there, as do pretty much anyone working in the arts. Inspiration here abounds, as do people to share your ideas with. Taking a stroll can help Vagabonds not just to unwind, but also freely express their worries and thoughts, battling stress and making new, enriching memories with others.

Some Vagabonds have reported that, in a series of hidden cavities within the Organ, strange words fill the air—spoken in an ancient language, seemingly engineered to help memories surface. If the group wishes ***to access the memories of Xanadu's distant past***, they would do well to head over here. Finding this particular section can provide with Vagabonds of the Machine with an eerie memory of the city's foundation, granted they succeed at a simple **Lost Tongue** check.

Who to Meet

Luga is a travelling musician and artisan, dedicated to their music as much as they are to the creation of new instruments, all carved out of Xanadu's bone marrow.

They are one of the prime experts on the Departed's traditional crafts, and always welcome those who wish to learn bone carving and other related skills. Lately, they've been working on a project that would allow for far-off communities to grow their own tissue outcrops. Luga hopes this will give people in far Penumbra a chance to create themselves, so that they get to see what ideas people outside of the city will come up with.

Probably one of the most creative minds of the last generation, ***Ukubu*** is a technician and explorer who has been running experiments within the confines of Seni's Organ for many cycles. Their research involves mapping Nibiru through sound, engineering devices that use a sort of echo-location signal emitter to identify structures across Nibiru and aid the efforts of local surveyors and hunters. They usually take the chance to talk to any traveller they come across, offering them one of their latest inventions in the hopes they'll provide some field work for them (which is as useful for them as for the travellers themselves, as Ukubu's tech gets progressively better at charting the Skyless World). Vagabonds have a lot to gain from meeting up with them.

Past the root windpipes and at the edge of a massive extractor fan, stands ***Elgosh;*** a member of the Heartguard, in charge of monitoring heat signals across Nibiru's air supply systems. The region of Xanadu is particularly close to the Torus' dark section, and lost peoples often wander into the adjacent tunnels. Most of the Vagabonds that call Xanadu home were found by Elgosh: What they have to say about what's out there, and the way Vagabonds happen upon the world, are likely to be of interest to the group.

Tale-Sparks

- *During a visit to the Organ, the group hears an unnerving noise—as if a siren had slipped into Seni's cavernous tunnels. The group is asked to help track and capture it, before it releases spores within and threatens every soul in Xanadu.*

- *Elgosh, knowing that the Vagabonds aim to traverse the vents near Xanadu, reaches out to them and asks them to investigate a strange shadow that was spotted near the vertical shafts leading to the Torus. What is it, and what is its connection to the Leviathan?*

The Roots

Branching tendrils reach outwards from massive bone pillars, tissue latching onto the walls of Xanadu, its surface covered in glowing fungi of warm tones—a spectacle for the eyes that becomes even more wondrous the more you learn about it. These are the Roots; a series of appendages that the Departed use to cultivate an expansive collection of fungi, the very source of all food. It was upon the discovery of a lost power installation that the Departed understood the Roots as an organic wonderland, fertile breeding grounds to a plethora of beneficial organisms.

The Roots' produce is the main reason for the Departed's longevity—their rich diet (coupled with the use of marrow fluid) make them some of the healthiest people in the Skyless World, tapping onto archaic fungi variants that have gone extinct pretty much everywhere else in Nibiru.

Why go There

The lower appendages of the Roots feature a series of organic outlets that serve ***to recharge automatons*** and to provide sustenance ***to most bioelectric lifeforms.*** Groups that arrive to Xanadu accompanied of any of these are likely to be invited to stop by here, make sure that their companions are well nourished during the stay.

Away from the Core, the multitude of powerlines that supply Nibiru start to falter, limiting the crops that can be grown in the Umbras. Xanadu has a history of open hearted engagement with the peoples of far Penumbra, and thus visiting the Roots can help ***to secure a supply of rare fungi***, crucial for the healthy development of human communities at Nibiru's frontiers.

Like with bone marrow outcrops, the Departed also found ways to transplant sections of the Roots severed from the main body of Xanadu. If Vagabonds need ***to grow a specific kind of fungi*** during their travels, asking for one of these Root outcrops might be the answer. Pruning, and a reliable generator by your side, is all you need to grow some basic crops to aid the group's survival.

Who to Meet

Growing fungi isn't the only way of using the Root's properties. As one of the most capable therapists in Xanadu, ***Rume*** has taken advantage of this, pruning a particular section of appendage into an impressive receptacle of aromatic varieties, where light dims and fresh air brings calm to those who need it. Those who have been through hard times usually visit Rume, looking to use the room to find the peace they desperately seek.

Nick dedicates a big part of their day to farming near the Root's main stem, surrounded by the fungi's glow and relaxing under the barely perceptible hum of the Root's currents. Nick has, for many cycles, been a great source of advice for Vagabonds needing counsel of any kind. Originally hailing from BrightTown, they think of Xanadu as a good place for Vagabonds to live in, and will assist the group however they can in making themselves at home.

Caring for the few AI's that inhabit Xanadu, ***Ghezalle*** built a home hanging from one of the Root's lower branches—dedicating their lapses to rescuing lost automatons along the tunnels near Xanadu. They believe in treating AI as entities with which is worth connecting (counter to the vast majority of the Arku's beliefs on AI). They've been particularly close with the Birther community that camps near the city, engaged with learning from each other about how humans relate to AI and vice versa.

Tale-Sparks

- *After hearing of the group's plans to visit the Torus, Nick gets a wild idea: To seize a crop of paleweed from Enki's wandering necropolis of Nergal. Nick's theory is that, with the power of the Roots, the Departed might be able to produce paleweed of their own to redistribute to those who need it the most. How will the group plan such an operation, and what sort of surprises will they run into?*

- *Smoke rises from the Roots, as the Departed witness one of its main branches on fire. After they evacuate, the investigation reveals that something (or someone) pushed Xanadu to overcharge that particular branch past what it was able to resist. Who could have done this, how are they able to control Xanadu's behaviour, and how can the group stop them from striking once more?*

The Fingers

Occupying the vast majority of Xanadu's surface, the Fingers are the clay with which the Departed mold the cityscape: a giant mass of tissue, grown and pruned as per the people's wants and needs. At the dawn of Xanadu's birth, the Fingers reached out to shelter the Departed, as they learned to live and communicate with the city. With time, they learned and perfected what's called the Method: a technique by which charged needles are sank into the Fingers' tissue across key points, stimulating growth. The Method evolved with time, and so did the city. Even now one can see, at the base of Xanadu, the oldest district and its crude shape, and the increasingly complex and refined burrows, as one turns towards the city's edge.

Why go There

Why pretty much everyone lives here! The Fingers are a complex network of hollowed out, sculpted, and ornamented burrows, and so necessarily—if one wishes ***to find someone in particular***—, one is likely to end their search here.

The Fingers' tunnels, and burrows—the interconnected layout they define for Xanadu—, are deeply alien to outsiders. Historically, for Vagabonds, this meant that they were the perfect place ***to hide away***: Even if chased into the city, persecutors would often be either rejected (as most people of violence are), or—if they did manage to slip in—, would find it impossible to locate their prey within the Fingers' labyrinthine expanse.

A few of the tendrils stretching outwards from the heart of Xanadu have been pushed through the vault's gateways, as architects fuse the structure of the Fingers with the very veins of Nibiru. ***To travel into the Torus immediacies***, one has to traverse the Fingers and follow their overgrowth to the West. At the end of it, tissue coils and wraps on itself, forming a sheltered outpost that the Departed use ***to stage expeditions into Penumbra***—fully provisioned with food stocks, beasts of burden, and survival tools.

Who to Meet

Arram lives within a creation of their own—a spiral abode that denotes his masterful knowledge of the Method. He is the main driver of the Fingers' growth into the outskirts of Xanadu, his expertise put to the test as sculpting that far away from the heart of the city presents a plethora of problems. Arram knows the Fingers' from memory, and is always willing to guide Vagabonds around.

Near the heart of Xanadu, an entanglement of superimposed burrows makes up the strange home of one Vagabond of the Wild, known as ***Man'nah***. This fellow is the last of a long line of amnesiacs who decided to seek for memories no more, and start their lives from scratch in the land of the Departed. Although their life philosophy prevents them from talking about what was before, Man'nah will almost always seek to offer refuge to Vagabonds, as have every one of the previous inhabitants of this peculiar haven.

Tale-Sparks

- *One of the members of the group (a Vagabond of the Womb) starts having recurring memories of a coiling, serpent-like structure, and the strange denizens living within. These are, in truth, memories of the Fingers. They hold the key to learning the path to Xanadu. How will they decipher it, and will they make it to the hidden city?*

- *After losing their way in the Fingers, the group arrives to a strange site where the smell of sulphur permeates the air. The walls seem to be in an advanced state of decay and, slowly but surely, they reveal a sort of disease spreading across the surface. What is the unexpected source of the infection? And how will they stop it?*

The Periphery

While the Departed and a slew of Outback Domains' communities have been in touch for hundreds of cycles, it was not too long ago that they experienced first contact with the Arku. The Birther congregation, the Archaean advance and the Enēšu encampment are all quite recent arrivals to the Xanadu periphery, yet each of them is particularly unique when it comes to their dealings with the Departed. In a way, the manner by which they interact with their new neighbours speaks volumes about their own identity and how its defined against the other.

The arrival of the Archaean Advance was announced first by messengers of neighbouring communities, giving the Departed a timely advantage. This group of Arku have considerable potential for violence deployed at the encampment, yet they are mostly barred from entering the city, and their course of action depends on a group of Silu in constant negotiation with the Archaean Tallaktu. The initial contact paved the way for suspicion on the part of the Departed: opening with questions rather than demonstrations of generosity or kinship, the Arku failed to hide their airs of superiority, hubris betraying their diplomatic chops and revealing where their true interests laid. They regard the inhabitants of Xanadu more as an object of study, rather than potential friends, and the Departed—well aware of this—, have since dedicated a lot of thought and planning with regards to how to best handle the Advance.

Birthers, on the other hand, didn't just engage with the Departed with cordiality and honesty; they also made the extremely risky move of revealing their identities and philosophy up front. Their wager paid off: immediately, the Departed recognised them as part of their ancestry, perhaps a lost strand of the original congregation that found the vault of Xanadu. They are free to go back and forth between their encampment and the city through exclusive channels, remaining hidden from the other peripheral communities, and they actively partake in joint studies with sages in Xanadu on their shared philosophy and history.

As for the Enēšu encampment, their approach to Xanadu has been cautious, mostly motivated by the promise of exchange—and of new allies close to the Arku centres of power. The Enēšu, having met up with the Departed in neutral grounds close to the Torus Corridor, recognise the good will of the people of Xanadu as per the testimony of both amnesiacs and Birthers, as well as that of the communities of the Outback Domains. Yet the Departed do know that, if their relationship were to become public, little would prevent the Arku from mobilising forces into their territory and subduing them by force. Ties with the Enēšu and how to work through them is still a matter of discussion among the Departed.

Lore Bites
Addressing Nature

When the Enēšu think of the Arku as being "stuck in the old ways", they don't so much refer to their social order as much as to their patterns of expansion. They often say Arku city-states either follow Nibiru to the T, or straight up rip the world to shreds in their wake. The Enēšu stand opposed to this idea: Nibiru's uninhabited locales offer hints to the way by which one may grow in harmony with the world', even if one is to stray from hallways and vaults. If reckless advance cuts a key generator off in order to feed a starving outpost, who knows if someone else on the other end will suffer consequences?

For the Enēšu, this divide is consequence to how differing views on the world, and ultimately on humanity, manifest. They say that the Arku saw cruelty in Nature and concluded that humanity would, accordingly, be naturally cruel. The Enēšu, on the other hand, saw cruelty in Nature yet perceived the meaning of humanity as the possibility of ending cruelty. Antumbra, with its innumerable fail-safe mechanisms, survives in spite of the Arku's relentless expansion. Penumbra, in its exceptionally cruel environs, has birthed a people who sees freedom in refraining from exerting that same violence in return.

It is maybe because of this way of relating to the world that the Arku, after thousands of cycles, are only now starting to see real cost of their vision: Since the times of the Supremacy, technicians working at the edge of empire have collected a wealth of information on Nibiru's anatomy, shedding light on the real consequences of Arku expansionism.

Tale-Sparks

- *Amidst the Enēšu, rumours abound of a hunter that moves along the tunnels coiling around Xanadu. This seems to be a scout from the Archaean Advance, operating beyond the exclusion area the Departed have had in place since their treaty with the Arku. Can the group intercept this agent? And if they do, what would be the right course of action for diplomacy?*

- *One of the congregation's Birther AIs is malfunctioning right during gestation period. The group is asked to sneak into the Archaean Advance in search for a spare transistor, lest the baby's life is put into further risk. How will the group achieve this?*

II
By Opened Hands

By Opened Hands is a short, open-ended adventure set in the Xanadu frontier, meant to kick off a longer story either in an Antumbran city-state, the Outback Domains, or in the city of Xanadu. The story starts off as the Vagabonds travel via Ascendant into Antumbra, their trip quickly turning into a disaster ride as the line is sabotaged by an unknown entity—leading to a crash and to an impromptu encounter with one of the inhabitants of Xanadu. They will face a couple of rough challenges while trying to heal Xanadu's wounds, recover from the disaster, and find out who and why sabotaged the Ascendant on its trip to Antumbra.

It's an ideal start off point for a story set in the Antumbran city-states or in the city of Xanadu, since you can adapt the ending depending on where you feel the players want to head to—using a series of hooks that you can repurpose as you deem fit.

Before we Start

As with other adventures, we will describe the way action may develop as the story unfolds. We will ***Embolden*** *certain actions to imply there should be a roll, simultaneously suggesting the roll's Action Type. We also give indications to Narrators in orange. If this is your first foray into Nibiru, you should read the material found in the* ***Nibiru Corebook*** *so you become familiar with the setting and the rules of play!*

Narrators Only!
Questions & Answers

Why was the Ascendant attacked?
In this adventure, the Archaean Advance is seen operating to sabotage the Ascendant on its way to Antumbra. The Vagabonds might have seen or experienced something that made the Silu/the Nexi consider "blowing them up" as the best course of action. We leave it up to you and your players to come up with the reason why this happened. You could even agree on this privately with one of them before the story kicks off, to spice things up! Maybe one of the Vagabonds was witness to a high profile murder, or knows the location of something the Covenant wants to protect at all costs.

What else is at stake?
Xanadu gets involved when the city's reflexes react to save the Ascendant from being destroyed. In turn the Vagabonds end up helping Oremeb—the main NPC they will meet—heal Xanadu's wounds. This marks a point of tension between the Archaean Advance and Xanadu, and a motivator for the Vagabonds to discover that it was, indeed, the people from the outpost that tried to terminate them.

There's also the encounter, near the end of the session, of a Birther AI in search for their family. For some reason, these people left the AI stranded. Could this be something the Archaean advance is looking for? Where these Birthers Vagabonds as well? And what kind of secret could be so important as to result in the destruction of an Ascendant?

Prelude

Start off the adventure with the alarm blasting, as one of the characters opens their eyes to find themselves amidst a menagerie of scattered, shredded boxes. A *sparkling* licks their face and runs off, climbing up, and the PC's eyes follow it to reveal that the passenger's bay has collapsed into the cargo area. Untying their seat belt, they'll feel a sudden jolt of pressure as they rise, the effect of krajj wearing off.

This one PC will need to wake up the rest. Once they're all up, they can make their way up into the torn remains of the passenger's bay. As they look up, they'll see *blood* flowing downwards from the cracks, bent joints and scars of the upper hull. This will trigger a **Stress Test (three dice)** against the Unknown. After they **Force** the hatch open, they will come out and into the massive ascendant tunnel. The craft has a large tear at the side, and above, a colossal, flesh-like protuberance tenses across the shaft. The tissue bleeds into the Ascendant hull, and runs along its length and into another protuberance below, wrapping around the bottom of the Ascendant. The tunnel from which it protrudes looks like the only way to go, specially considering the Ascendant is starting to fall into pieces.

The protuberance recedes as the vagabonds climb down on to it, and on its own, slowly, carries them into a hallway. A red light shines and reveals a tunnel completely covered in unnatural growth—unlike anything they seen before.

Scene 1: Bloomlight Encounter

In this section, pale blue fungi spirals down from the tunnel ceilings, shedding light on metal plaques thoroughly covered in red, musky overgrowth. The group can **Identify** this overgrowth as edible, having a salty taste not unlike that of dried seaweed. The rest of the protuberance seems to run along the tunnel, at some point disappearing through a vent in the ceiling. Wherever it is they head to, the group will advance into a dark section of the tunnel. At this point, ask the group who is the first person in the marching line. That PC will suddenly step into the nothing, falling into an unseen gap in the dark. Right as the rest realises this, let said PC know that, out of nowhere, a hand grabs them in the mid-fall. The rescuer pulls them up and into a small, tube-like tunnel. They have honest, pitch black eyes and wear cream colour drapes. The rescuer points at a ladder located to the side of the hole, which would allow them to go back into the main tunnel.

Upon rejoining the group, the rescuer will introduce themselves as Oremeb. They speak with a a throaty accent, and while they use words that the PCs are not familiar with, their speech is easily intelligible (and viceversa).

Oremeb is going to be curious about the group, asking lots of questions and if they have something to eat (which, they should have). Upon hearing of what happened with the Ascendant, Oremeb will let the PCs know that the accident was the reason they were heading towards the vertical tunnel, and asks the PCs if they can help out figuring out what happened. Oremeb is willing to take them to their "village" after they check on the crash site.

On their way there, Oremeb will stop as soon as they find the strange protuberance sinking into the tunnel ceiling. When they see it, they'll prance towards the wall, where the tissue creeps up. From a cream-coloured satchel, they'll pull a small container with a series of needles—all of which have heads of differing shapes. Oremeb will pull these needles, one by one, and sink them into the tissue. Each needle, wrapped in small fungi heads, will glow at differing paces as Oremeb touches on the tissue. They will turn and say:

"The city is hurting. Seems like whatever happened to you was no accident—someone set you up to crash against Xanadu"

If the PCs ask about what "Xanadu" and the "city" are, Oremeb will go on to explain what Xanadu is, answering any immediate questions, and inviting the group to follow them. They can answer questions as they follow along, heading towards the Ascendant tunnel.

As soon as the group reaches the edge of the vertical tunnel, they'll see how the protuberance has shifted, coiling around the upper part of the Ascendant. Its tissue has lost most of its color, blood now just trickling along the elevator's corpse. Anyone who has any sort of **Medicine** or **First Aid** capability might see that the tearing along the protuberance has been covered in what seems to be scar tissue, and below the skin there seems to be intermittent, irregular flickers of pale light.

Turning to Oremeb will see them wide eye, almost petrified at the sight. They will react with a trembling, deeply shaken voice, whispering lamentations to themselves. After a few seconds, they will ask the group if they are okay, given the "state in which their home lies". They will express condolences for the "death of the Ascendant", and ask them if they would care to help treat the wounds of Xanadu. Oremeb will state that, for this, they need a source of power. Depending on how you feel about the situation, you can let the players think and come up with the most logical solution, which would be to take the batteries from the Ascendant's corpse. If they have issues coming up with that solution, let them think a bit more on any alternatives, and if that doesn't work, you can nudge them by having Oremeb ask about the Ascendant, or point at their **Tech Repair** skills and give them the solution on a successful assessment.

Scene 2: The Autopsy

A quick **Tech** assessment will tell the group that, in order to extract power, they will have to access the lower levels of the Ascendant, release the circular capacitor batteries from the inside, and then pull the cables located in each of those batteries from the outside—extending them towards the base of the protuberance.

All through the following bit, it's cool to create a tense atmosphere through music, and try to depict the extremely unstable structure as it remains suspended over the hundred-mile void below.

The Vagabonds will have to **Climb** along the side of the tunnel, and use a dangling cable to reach across, landing on top of the hatch. Being careful as they descend, they'll eventually reach the engine room. In there, they'll realise that liberating the batteries requires a key from the pilot. In that moment, Oremeb will peep through the hatch, ask if everything is alright, and will offer themselves to fetch the key. After they do, they'll shout "catch!" and let the keys fall for the Vagabonds to **Catch**. Failing to do so should lead to some particularly scary consequence, where the key falls into one of the condenser vents, and whomever remains outside will see a blast on the lower plating of the Ascendant, black smoke filling the tunnel as battery acid leaks into the nether. Pretty much a scare, which might leave two batteries unusable, and leave them with no choice but to **Hack** the access point.

However they end up making it work, the **Climb** towards the Xanadu limb will see them performing shock treatment through the battery cable pincers, with the energy flow beneath the skin quickly returning to normal. At some point, the Ascendant will give up and fall into the abyss, its body twisting and crushing itself in its descent.

With the autopsy completed, Oremeb will say they're sorry for what happened, and offer to help them in whatever they need. Depending on what the group wants, Oremeb will give them options and risks to consider.

Scene 3: Petrol Floods

Arguably, there are three main scenarios that could play out depending on what the group wishes to do—which Oremeb will point out.

If the group wishes to travel to Antumbra, Oremeb will tell them that there is an outpost (the Archaean Advance) standing between them and the main arteries. The outpost is partly ran by an Enki Nexus, so they'd do best to bypass it. In order to do that, they could try to sneak inside a returning haulers, since those vehicles usually travel empty to Charchemish (or any particular city you'd wish your players to visit) to restock. It would make entry into the Archaean city-state easy, but the hard part would be to infiltrate the outpost.

If the group wishes to remain in the Outback Domains, Oremeb will tell them they can stay at their house until they decide what to do. **There's also the option of heading out to Xanadu**, in which case Oremeb would need to first speak to the city's assembly before anything—to make sure people consent to letting the group in.

Whatever the case, Oremeb will tell them to head anti-cyclewards (meaning, against the direction of the Core's burst cycles), and to avoid any patrols until they cross a flooded field, reaching an abandoned facility where they can reconvene. Oremeb will make sure Xanadu's limb retreats safely in the meantime.

As the group heads out, they'll soon find themselves delving into a hexagonal tunnel heading downwards into the dark. Lit by flickering orange lights, the tunnel eventually becomes populated by twirling, purple fungi—growing wider, its floor inked by black oil splotches. If the players ask, is good to tell them that they could intuitively guess as to why—stating that there's probably a broken oil pipe above head, its contents leaking slowly into the tunnels below. They'll keep this march for about a day.

At some point, they'll notice a school of *sparklings* running across the tunnel, seemingly running from something. At the turn of a corner, they will **Spot** the anxious shaking of a flashlight's glare on the petrol pools. It seems like a patrol is nearby, and if the group quiets down, they'll hear a conversation among them, saying something about "the sheer length of the damages" and the "need to cordon off all affected areas". Peeking out will reveal that there is, indeed, a group of people carrying surveying equipment and a small cart with repair tools. There's about six of them, two of whom carry deathspitters.

The group stands at a crossroads. They could either try to find an alternative, parallel service tunnel to cross, or they could aim to hide in one of the crevices along the tunnel, create a distraction of some sort, and sneak past them somehow. The worst scenario in which they are spotted and a face-off ensues should still see them getting past them, even if it comes at a great cost. One thing is certain: If the group is spotted, do point out that one of the military guys will pull a strange cord from a piece of tech in their vest, a strange beep blaring a couple times along with a red light (which is essentially, a signal beacon to HQ—guaranteeing they will not be the last folk from the Archaean Advance the group will encounter).

Past the patrol, the tunnel widens up into what seems to be a large compound, where the petrol flood becomes a much more serious thing. A raised platform at the centre of the compound serves as a support for what seems to be the abandoned facility Oremeb had mentioned. The platform can be reached by wading across the knee-high petrol moat that surrounds it.

Scene 4: Firefield Stroll

As the group crosses into the platform, they will find themselves surrounded by metal beams and hanging plates. A cursory look at the installations, specially if one has some knowledge of **Infrastructure** or **Architecture** of some sort will reveal that these are the scavenged leftovers of what used to be a warehouse, with plenty of broken metal crates laying around. At the center, an ominous silhouette stands alone, covered in a petrol-stained blanket. The silhouette is as tall as two and a half adult humans, its contour revealing what seem to be four metal legs beneath the covers.

If they were to remove the blanket, the group will be facing a Birther AI, which will immediately activate and turn to look at them with 8 sets of red eyes, each of them blinking at differing tempos. Most of its plating has been removed, with a few welded plaques remaining—which seem to be inscribed with the names of three people (Talliyah, Ephrau and Ubara), probably the family that used to own the AI. One of the plaques, running at the back of the AI's head mount, reads:

"On the turn of our fortieth cycle together, let our love be bound by the seams of our holy icon, that which will carry us to our dreamland of sound sleep and tranquillity"

The AI will ask a few questions of the group—if they are Arku, and if they know where their family is. The AI, who goes by the name of Io, can give the names of their owners as printed on its back, and will attempt to make conversation with them. In the meantime, the group may **Search** the place for something useful, scavenging to find a couple of edible fungi growing below a dormant heater, and an old refrigeration unit that has a functioning fungi cultivator (a small device that can be tied to one's belt, and can grow small fungi batches over a few days). The cultivator has a couple of unused pellets, which can be loaded and sprayed with water to start growing fungi.

Succeeding at that previous roll will also reveal a few discarded changes of clothes, and as the Vagabond continue their search, they will smell something foul behind a broken plate. If they turn it over, they'll find human remains. A **Medical** assessment would tell you that the remains have been there for about a full cycle. If any of the PCs dare take a closer look, they'll see that within the deceased's chest cavity, a pale white, glowing orchid-like fungi has grown. This is ghost-fungi, the miracle fungi of Enki's Necropolis, which grows in dead remains and can cure a wide range of diseases as well as suppress pain.

As the group continues searching the place, talking among each other and with the AI, time will pass. Whenever you feel like it's appropriate, you may interrupt the situation to tell the player who's participated the least that their character suddenly catches the glow of flashlights over the petrol moat. The search patrol has arrived.

Whatever they decide, it's pretty obvious that staying in the platform would be suicide. As soon as they PCs start deliberating, Io will ask to please not leave her alone, saying that if they accompany her, she could help them cross the petrol field. The following sequence will entail the search patrol crossing, firing with their deathspitters and eventually, either by the PCs hand or as a resource to stop their escape, petrol moat will catch on fire. As deathspitter spikes whistle by them, the AI will ask them to put their **Repair** skills to the test in order to disarm and get rid of its emergency fuel compartment, so that it doesn't catch fire and blows up in their face.

In whatever shape they manage to cross the firefield in, they will arrive at the other side, going up an incline into a large tunnel and seeing the silhouette of Oremeb calling for them, and lobbing a smoke grenade behind them to cover them from the shooters. As they retreat to safety, Oremeb will tend to them and any burns, and will ask them if they have either made a decision or if they are set on whatever they had decided to do before (if they did).

There are several ideas that could lead into further adventures from here on…

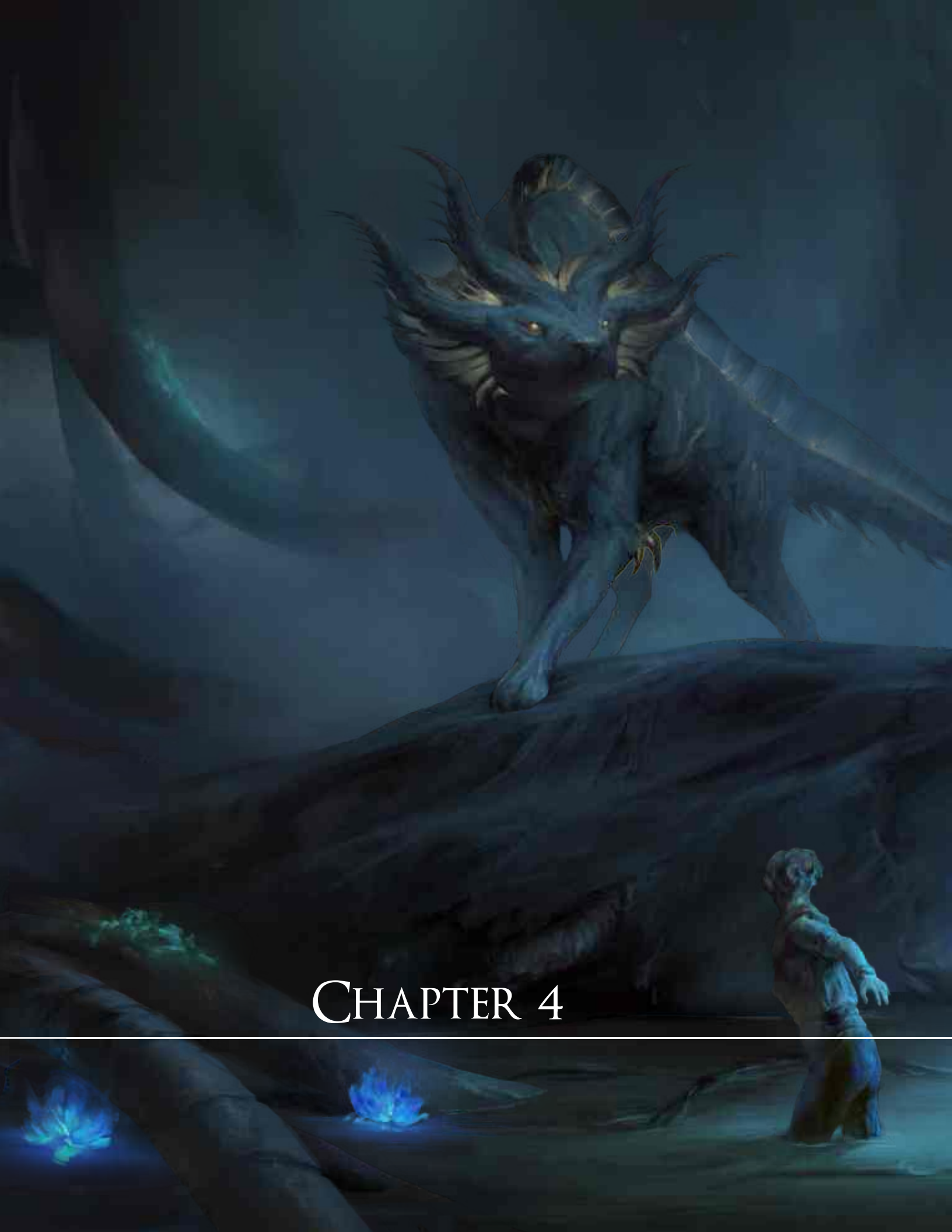
The group could head over to Xanadu, under the auspices of having helped heal the city, and given that they are being chased by the Advance. In this case, Oremeb will introduce them not just to the city, but to an envoy from the Birther congregation who might help Io and to find out what happened with the AI's family.

The group could attempt to travel into Antumbra, in which case they could either try to sneak into one of those haulers Oremeb mentioned, or connect through Oremeb with the Enēšu encampment near Xanadu, who could help them traverse the Domains and sneak into any particular city-state they wish to get in.

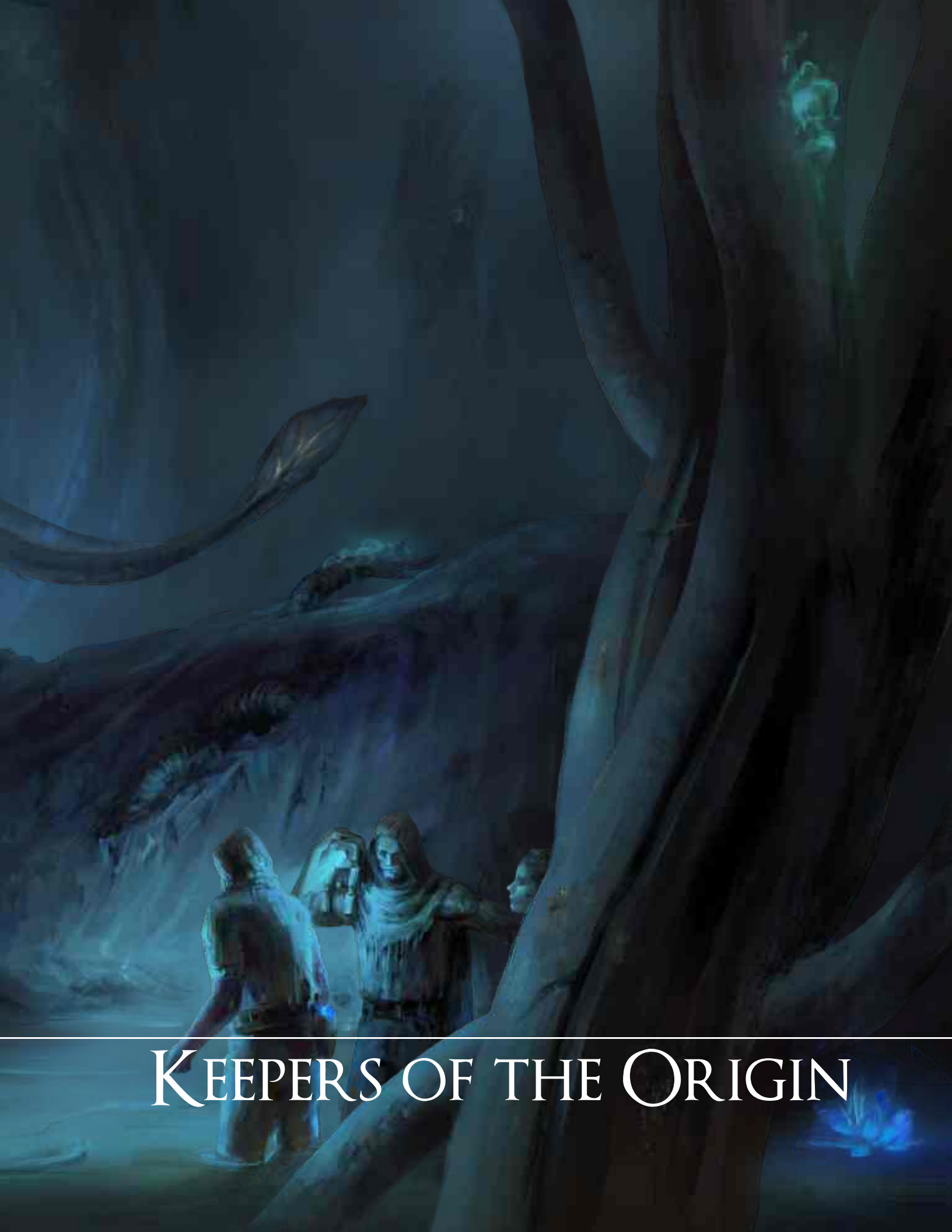
The group could stay in the Outback Domains, in which case they could be invited to Xanadu by Oremeb, who would direct them to speak to the city's cartographers in order to look for counsel on how to traverse the region depending on what they aim to do.

The Archaean Plot

The attack on the Ascendant is the lingering mystery surrounding this story, which you may continue to explore as the story goes on. One thing that you may reveal as the PCs engage with Xanadu and their people is that the city actually interceded to protect the Ascendant at the time of the crash, preventing it from blowing up outright. Who was behind it? And, will they try to finish the job?



Chapter 4



Keepers of the Origin

The Collective

Vagabonds are tied to one another through a bond that burrows deep, fuelling the will to fight to see the turn of the next cycle. These relationships have a story to tell, a collective identity to shape—of the amnesiacs who came before, are now, and will awake in the future. This community plays a central role in Xanadu, as do their memories. From the Whisperers of old, to young errants washing ashore in nascent settlements, players can use these rules to grow this collective identity, and to weaponize its many traits to face the challenges ahead.

This is done primarily via the **Communal Sheet** (found in page **113**), which the players use to define several aspects of the Vagabond's collective. Games that use the Xanadu rules start off with this sheet, its spaces empty except for the names of those who belong to the group (located in the "We Are" space).

Against the Odds

Collective Memory Points (CMPs) are the building blocks of your group's identity; they engrave the collective consciousness of your group with the memories of important events and realisations, shaping the soul of the collective, as well as with the iconography and symbology that come to represent them. CMPs are used to create **Collective Memories**, and they might be acquired in the following manner:

At the end of each session, those who choose to contribute scrub off a number of MPs from their character sheets (the pooled total can never exceed 6 MPs). Then, the players make a **Special Roll (with a number of dice equal to the number of pooled MPs)**. If successful, they earn a CMP, which they can add to the Communal Sheet.

The Buy In

There is a stark difference between the intimate recollections penned by individual Vagabonds, and the momentous recounts that the group as a whole conjures through Collective Memories. While the first offer actual evidence for why a character is this or that way, the second represents a generalised, flowery narrative that explains why some people within the group happen to be adept at something.

Given that the collective is nothing but an imagined community, its narrative does not speak to all Vagabonds. Some might buy into the whole idea of group identity, and some might not—with both having valid reasons to temporarily shift into the other. This is represented by the Buy In: essentially, the price one pays to model themselves into the evolving identity of the Vagabond collective.

At the end of every session, if you wish to buy into the collective, you can sacrifice your usual 1 MP gain. This allows you to use all bonuses granted by Events, Myths, and the Communal Beacon during the next session.

Think about it as a sort of renewing subscription to this whole idea of "Vagabonds being like this or that": It requires an effort on your part because it is, in fact, not true—yet the effects of believing in it can be very real. Like belief, it might wane and come back in full force as conflict rises and subsumes along your character's life.

In short, there are some moments when Vagabonds might feel more part of their group than others. Good judgement on the part of players on this should always award them with Influence Points.

Collective Memories

In every community's history, there are moments that serve to forge the imagined ideals and traits of those who belong to it. Your collective is no different, and as such, it has a history that can affect the individuals comprising the Vagabond community.

Whenever a player feels like a significant moment in your story is occurring, they may choose to (with group's consent), spend CMPs to create a Collective Memory. These memories come in three different types: **Events**, **Myths**, and the **Communal Beacon**, costing 1, 2 and 3 Collective Memory Points respectively.

Events, like regular Memories, affect a particular Action Type. They reference moments of note in the history of the Collective, in which impossible odds were beaten. These are written down in the Collective Sheet. The Action Type affected depends on the group's interpretation of the event, and the bonus granted is always a +1.

Myths define the Collective's legends, imagery, and mythology. They come in a variety of flavors; for example, the rumor that there's a particular species in Nibiru that watches over Vagabonds, or maybe one that explains how providing safe haven to amnesiacs will bring good fortune to the host. A list of Myths follows in this page, but we encourage you to come up with your own if you so desire. Like Events, each Myth has a Memory written in, which should explain how the effect of the Myth came to be:

"We Remember a lapse of violence, where the city patrol was out in full force—busting containers near the warehouse refuge. An AI with a heat drill operated nearby: Whisperers took over it, and created a new, discreet hole in the building's foundations, which can still be found and put to use as a hiding place."

...Myth: Lost Burrows.

"We Remember Enki's punishment of Ephraim after they stole the Covenant's formula for krajj. They cut their thumb and ring finger. The happening echoed across Whisperers in Nibiru, and now Vagabonds use the Hand Sign of Ephraim to identify each other."

...Myth: Communal Sigil.

Finally, the **Communal Beacon** is a special type of Collective Memory, of which the group can only have one. It represents an alternative way of gaining Memory Points (to compensate for the Buy In costs), and are backed by the memory of one particularly important event—the moment in which Vagabonds faded into the darkness of the Skyless World, which the players need to decide upon. Examples of these can be found in the next page.

Awila arrives at the meeting point, holding the stolen credit tags. The group, stationed nearby, observes the scene. As the Silu's envoy makes their appearance, they claim to know of the presence of the rest of the group. They demand not just the credit tags, but a show of loyalty to the Silu—an act that can cement their trust for future arrangements. Awila takes her knife, and in a matter of seconds, grants the envoy with one of her fingers. The group then decides to spend a Collective Memory Point to acquire a new Event. They write the memory detailing what took place and—deciding on a bonus of +1 to Negotiation.

Storytelling Lessons
The Age of Whisperers

The Whisperers that we spoke of in the first pages of the Nibiru Corebook were Vagabonds who faced the world in a manner unthinkable for amnesiacs today. They represent an ideal state of being for many, their stories serving as a pantheon of lessons and cautionary tales that can lead Vagabonds into a glorious era of peace and tranquillity.

However, amnesiacs should know better than most that memories are never quite as they seem. Differing paths might open for different communities of Vagabonds, and as they gain a foothold on whatever turf they may set their sights upon, you might find room for stories of competing ideologies, as Vagabonds clash to decide which one will pave the road to freedom. Think about the possibilities of this, in games set around the struggle of Vagabond groups debating on the righteous path to self governance.

Blessings of Mercy

A rumour, whispererd among the locals from generation to generation, rewarding the kindness of strangers with the best that the fates have to offer.

Upon purchase of this Myth, choose a town or settlement located in the Skyless World (or a neighbourhood if picking an Antumbran city-state). Any Vagabond in that locale may spend 1 MP and 1 IP, making it so that almost anyone will grant them refuge if needed so during the current scene.

Communal Sigil

A sigil, used by Whisperers, often hidden through unconventional methods. It serves to identify friend from foe, to separate the fake from the real.

Upon purchase of this Myth, draw the sigil in the Communal Sheet. Then, choose in which way the Vagabonds use it. It might be through a specific pattern of file organization, a echo as a distinct sound, or even printed beneath the skin.

Loyal Kin

A creature, bound to Whisperers since flickers past, comes to their aid at the most crucial of times.

Upon purchase of this Myth, decide which creature will be your loyal kin. Any Vagabond may spend 2 MP and 2 IP to summon this creature, which will come to their aid, only to leave afterwards. The group can use this power only once per session.

Memories of the Chase

A painful memory, latent among the locals, of Whisperers' persecution and humanity in the face of cruelty.

Upon purchase of this Myth, choose a town or settlement located in the Skyless World (or a neighbourhood if picking an Antumbran city-state). The locals there will refuse to cooperate with Enki's Covenant Nexi, going as far as violently rejecting them if they try to operate nearby.

The Better Angels

A servant of Nibiru, engineered to care for Whisperers as they pass their domain.

Once per story, the group can sacrifice all their MP and IP in order to see a Lammasu of Nibiru (page 79) arrive at the scene, coming to their aid before vanishing into the shadow of the world.

Lost Burrows

A forgotten path leads into hiding places, only known to Whisperers, providing momentary respite amidst the modern hellscape of Antumbran city-states.

Upon purchase of this Myth, describe the path and location of a particular spot in the city, where a discreet, unknown hiding place had been carved by Vagabonds. It may not serve as long term refuge, but it can be used to hide during emergencies.

Song of Reckoning

A verse of fear, imprinted in the locals' memory—it instills them to seek refuge and to prepare for the worst.

Upon purchase of this Myth, describe a verse sang long ago to warn of impending doom (whatever that was for the locals). When a Vagabond sings it, if they spend 2 IP and 2 MP, the locals will recognise it and run into hiding, preparing supplies and staying home to protect themselves from whatever it is that comes.

Offering of Abundance

A rumoured sign, implying the need for help in gaining substenance. Those who make the offering see their luck rewarded.

Upon purchase of this Myth, describe with your friends a subtle sign, to be used during conversation with the locals. If used along with the expenditure of an IP, the Vagabond will be visited soon with an offering of food and water, made in discreet ways.

Ancestral Summons

A signed recording, the importance of its contents carrying the weight of the whole skyless world.

Upon purchase of this Myth, choose a city in Nibiru and describe with your friends a series of sounds, which all of you know how to produce, and that can be recorded onto any voice message you deliver. If a recording signed in this way is delivered, along with the expenditure of an IP and an MP, the receiver will do anything within their power to comply with the recording's instructions.

Communal Beacons

Beacon of the Amnesiac State

The collective's wondrous skills are put to use for the worst cause.

At the end of a session in which any one Vagabonds functioned as a police force, and/or coerced people by the threat or use of violence in ways that would cause a Stress Test (Violence), each of the Vagabonds who opted in gains one Memory Point.

Beacon of the Skyless Garden

The collective sets its sights into bringing Eden to Nibiru.

At the end of a session in which the group made an effort to protect and or nurture the fauna and flora of the station, each of the Vagabonds who opted in gains one Memory Point.

Beacon of the Promised Haven

The collective works to make a new home for the amnesiac kin, far from the horrors of known society.

At the end of a session in which the group made an effort to find and protect other Vagabonds, as well as to secure a final settling place where they may live in peace, each of the Vagabonds who opted in gains one Memory Point.

Beacon of the Boundless Destiny

The collective seeks to shatter the Skyless World's walls, determined to see what hides behind the steel veil.

At the end of a session in which the group made advances in escaping Nibiru, each of the Vagabonds who opted in gains one Memory Point.

Beacon of Enki's Demise

The collective works towards a world rid of Enki's subjects.

At the end of a session in which the group made advances to reduce the influence of, sabotage assets owned by, or rescue people from Enki's Covenant, each of the Vagabonds who opted in gains one Memory Point.

Beacon of Amargi

The collective aims to break the chains of those beholden to the Credit Society and its overlords.

At the end of a session in which the group made an effort to further the goals of Free Penumbra and the Enēšu revolution, each of the Vagabonds who opted in gains one Memory Point.

Beacon of Rust

The collective seeks to secure safe passage for rogue AIs into the lands beyond Umbra.

At the end of a session in which the group made an effort to protect rogue AIs from rust hunters, and guide them to places beyond the sphere of human violence, each of the Vagabonds who opted in gains one Memory Point.

Revelation of the Debtor

The Vagabond reaches out towards the domed roofs, receiving a loaned identity which is meant to see them through their struggles—yet tying their soul and fate to the lender's.

Active: The Vagabond receives a "loaned" identity by reaching out with their hands towards the ceiling. Immediately, the player rolls two dice. The resulting number is the number of Rank 1 Memories the Narrator gets to write (deciding the Action Type and all) in the Vagabonds next page, which will all belong to the same person. This person will be someone born in privilege, always in a better position than the Vagabond. The roll also determines the debt's severity, and the number of sessions the character has to pay the debt. The debt is paid just by shaking hands with the lender—immediately, all loaned memories are lost, and the lender regains them. If the "payday" passes without having shook hands, the player has to make a **Stress Test (Violence)** against a number of dice equal to the debt's severity at the end of every session.

Revelation of the Killer

The Vagabond touches the skin of their subject—their heartbeat stopping as they face waves of harrowing nostalgia.

Active: The Vagabond can, when touching a human target, make a **Special Roll** with a number of dice determined by how many Memory Points they spent. If this roll is successful, the target suffers a fatal heart attack as they relive, in the blink of an eye, entire cycles of their past lives within their mind's eye (the more Memory Points spent, the more memories are crammed in this deadly instant).

Revelation of the Unannounced

The Vagabond intrudes the memories of a sleeping victim, making themselves a part of their perceived past.

Active: The Vagabond can whisper, to the ear of a sleeping person, an expression of apologies for their intrusion. Then, the player chooses a particular moment they have in mind of the sleeper's past lives, and the Narrator goes on to narrate a short scene set in that moment. The Vagabond is an actor in this scene, able to influence the events. This interaction cannot last more than five minutes. When the sleeper wakes up, they will remember the scene as it was left by the intruding amnesiac. The Vagabond then takes a **Stress Test (five dice) against Violence.**

Revelation of the Glassmaker

The Vagabond projects one of their memories outwards for the whole world to see.

Active: The Vagabond can, when looking at a glass-like surface of any size (from a small mirror to the entire facade of a Archaean arcology), project a memory from their point of view. The projection also comes with sound, as everything in contact with the mirror vibrates in otherworldly fashions to produce an imitation of what the Vagabond was hearing at the time. It lasts no longer than a couple of minutes.

Revelation of the Florist

The Vagabond channels remembrance into the very essence of life, memories blooming into the material world by the sheer force of nostalgia.

Active: Make a Special Roll (Two Dice). This determines how many memories, along with their effects, you can erase from this Journal Page. Immediately, the Vagabond falls to their knees, their vision blurred as their surroundings light up—the bluish glow of blooming flowers piercing through cables, machinery and anything metallic. These flowers have a fain electric charge that can be harvested to power small devices. They can also be consumed for nourishment. While two or three erased Memory result in a small patch, larger amounts (six, seven and eight) create entire fields of beautiful, blooming bulbs. Those who consume these flowers are likely to be visited by dreams reminiscent of the erased memories.

Revelation of the Transient

The Vagabond lets memories take them back to memorable places of their past—quite literally.

Active: Choose a locale in Nibiru (cannot be a concrete Habitat, like BrightTown) that shows up in at least one of your memories. Make a **Special Roll (with dice equal to the number of memories set in that locale)**. If the roll succeeds, the Vagabond and those who are holding in close embrace are instantly transported to said locale, materializing by the sheer power of the memories' vivid imagery and nostalgia. If the roll fails, the Vagabond and their travelling companions disappear from the world—leaving nothing behind. Whatever fate becomes to them is up to the Narrator to decide.

The Womb

As late blooming flowers seizing their chance to see the Skyless World—yet thousands of seasons past due—Vagabonds of the Womb rise from within the walls of their habitat with many questions in mind. Once nurtured by their legendary progenitor, the People's Shepherd, they now stand over the leftovers of a world they were supposed to help build—so changed it might as well be considered lost. Yet the memories of what came before were kept up to date, cultivated and harvested by the station's very own ghosts. How will they shape the world around you?

Vagabonds of the Womb carry the memories of Nibiru's bones and flesh. Their condition reveals a deeply buried truth about the station: that the walls have ears, the ceilings, eyes, and all they've seen and heard over the cycles is at the Vagabond's reach—if they dare remember.

Theme: Where the Line Blurs

Playing as a Vagabond of the Womb sheds light into how Nibiru sees itself. While the station has known to speak in the language of viral replication, imparting knowledge to Vagabonds in varying strands, the particular virus that affects Vagabonds of the Womb—called the Blueprint Strain—turns player characters into part-time architects of the Skyless World. Each Memory is expressed as the feelings and sensations of buildings, facilities, etc.—both human-made and of unknown origins. The events of these recollections are always seen, heard, and felt throughsteel walls, roof tiles, power line static, as if everything was part of a connected neural network, feeding their information to the Vagabonds' mind. Eventually, these memories blossom, transforming the station itself.

Memories: Nibiru's Building Blocks

Whether inhabiting the innards of far off hallways and feeling the heat of a chase overhead, burning as a light bulb's filament over some shady backstreet dealing, or peering within one's titanium skeleton to silently attend a board room meeting, Vagabonds of the Womb have an unparalleled source of knowledge that they can tap into, as well as a plethora of unique points of view they can assume when retrieving past recollections:

"I Remember the pain felt within as the weight of suspenders pulled at my seams, the warm sparks hitting the floor as the apprentice technicians practised both mounting and putting apart the AI's body parts, over and over again."

...-1 to Repairing.

"I Remember their voice slipping through my fans, the air that passed through me carrying words oh so inspiring. I wonder if the priest knew, when looking up to the church ceiling—as if aware of my presence—that I, too, found their words just as delightful."

...+1 to Public Speaking.

"I Remember Io's rage as she slammed the modules into the floor and the circuitry below. I could feel her frustration cutting through my veins, and even though through the metal sheets I should have lashed, I found the strength to hold onto the plastic frame, keeping my charge in place."

...+1 to Keeping Your Cool.

Where I End And You Begin

When we first crossed the gates, I didn't say a word. I didn't want to sound weird, but then again, I feel like whatever I felt then would've been hard to hide anyway. I knew every inch of that garden. I knew the exact timing when the lights would switch on, and I could still remember their faint warmth on the floor plaques. The scarring along the outer walls of the hothouse brought sad memories, and the sound of the sprinkler by the shed reminded me of all those conversations I used to listen to back during those cycles.

Aram unlocked the suitcase and set up the charges within, his eyes seeking for confirmation from everyone else, until reaching mine. They linger there. I stand petrified.

"I don't think I can do this"

Whatever gave shape to Nibiru infused, within every inch of its unknowable structure, the faculties necessary to acquire and store information. These memories, channelled through the station's nervous system, course within the Vagabonds of the Womb—transforming tissue in their wake, and eventually divorcing from their bodies to reunite with the Nibiru. Though the true function of these severed Shards is unknown, their capabilities to grow and change themselves and their surroundings hint at the origins of Nibiru, and the way the station sees Vagabonds and their role in the bigger picture.

Shards of Nibiru

When the game starts, choose a particular building, district, or locale found pretty much anywhere within the station. You'll be writing memories from the point of "view" of that very place (we suggest checking out the many locales described in the city sections of both the *Nibiru Corebook* and *Xanadu*), and you will do so until your first **Severance** (which we will explain below). With each new Severance, you'll have to choose a new building or locale to write about. Choose wisely: The stuff you'll write about might prove invaluable at the right time!

The Severance

Vagabonds of the Womb create memories in which the station itself, its structures and mechanisms, seem to feel and witness whatever happens within their confines. Their significance to the station is tied to a hidden power that fuels the Blueprint Strain, driving change and eventually achieving Severance.

As well as choosing the building or locale, the player has to decide which body part this their first pages will be associated to, from the following list. The number in brackets indicates the number of Journal Pages that can be tied to each body part, which cannot be exceeded:

Eyes (5), Lower Jaw (3), Nose (1), Right Ear (1), Left Ear (1), Right Arm (4), Left Arm (4), Right Hand (2), Left Hand (2), Right Leg (5), Left Leg (5).

As memories develop within any body part, blue and black marks form beneath the skin, which can only be spotted when the body part itself has reached its maximum capacity for memories.

When reaching the end of any Journal Page, the player can trigger the Severance, choosing one of these body parts, and **removing the current Journal Page as well as all other Pages associated with the severed body part**. This, of course, means that all bonus and penalties tied to those pages, as well as their Revelations, are lost as well.

These pages are now kept aside to represent the information stored in the newly created **Shard**. The severance is painless—the body part just falls effortlessly, leaving behind cauterised, black and blue vestigial tissue. Whenever they will it, they Shard will be able to perform simple actions, move by themselves (skin making way for vestigial tissue to function as movement appendices), and even transmit information to the Vagabond's nervous system, allowing them to perceive things at a distance through the Shard.

Furthermore, Journal Pages belonging to the Shard might be discarded outright to perform **Metamorphosis**—the final transformations orchestrated by the Blueprint Strain. These are, ordered by number of discarded pages they require to execute, as follows:

1. Flower of Remembrance: The Shard's tissue spreads outwards, a patch of black and blue flowers will growing from within. It's petals can be consumed at anytime, granting Memory Points equal to the result of a ***Special Roll (one die)****.*

2. Rogue's Beacon: The Shard lines skywards, springing three antenna from within. The Vagabond might spend a Memory Point to activate the beacon for the scene. It will lure in Rogue AIs within a 10 kilometre radius, which will then surround and protect the beacon and its holder.

3. Whisperers' Haven: The Shard disassembles, a dozen lights blinking within its structure, as the surrounding elements—such as floorplaques, circuitry, etc.—come together in a modular shape to form a cube-shaped haven. Its interior is large enough for the group to hide in. This structure remains in place unless activated by spending a Memory Point. When doing so, it can move surprisingly fast across almost any surface, obeying the Vagabond's will, as the station tears itself down and rebuilds itself back up to make way for the Shard.

4. Shepherds Trail: The Shard flattens, a small orifice opening to show a blinking red light. When the Vagabond wills it, by pressing the Shard against a wall, they may spend any number of Memory Points to see Nibiru opening a new hallway in the chosen direction. Each spent Memory Point makes way for a section of about 100 metres.

5. Angel Egg: The Shard turns inwards, black and blue bleedouts on the ground below. From the puddle emerges a new shape; an egg with a pale white shell. It shall be protected at all cost, lest the wrath of Nibiru befell on its caretaker.

Once the Severance happens, a new body part should be picked—as well as a new building or locale to use as a conduit for remembrance—, thus starting the process once again.

Beacon: A Tour of Me

Finding your way into a place you've (literally) been is bound to bring back memories. Vagabonds of the Womb earn an extra Memory Point at the end of a session in which they've spent time at a building or locale they remember things from, regardless of whether or not those memories have been severed.

Picture...

...the sunken vault, always at the brink of suffocation, which thought itself forsaken until the humans arrived. They settled in, restoring water levels to normal and building a home on the surface. As the foundations were laid, I could feel every column piercing through the water, the weight of the commuters and their daily routine, the caress of the boats on the surface and their fishing nets. I became privy to every secret they voiced, every back alley struggle, adopting the name they gave me.

...the fifth precinct, a walled-off section of the glass makers district. For many cycles, I was left on my own to nurture the lives that found a place in my insides. Then, men with guns took an interest in me, pushing everyone out like a selfish parasite. Their engineers draped me in a thousand hanging screens, hijacking my voice to promote their dread rhetoric. Unwillingly bound by the laws of physics, I'd cast their message in blinding lights, shining down on the execution plaza below, every lapse driving me to my wits end. Liberation couldn't come soon enough.

...the house at the edge of the precipice, hanging by a web of steel threads. Ever since waking up I've held its weight against Kabādu, up until the usurpers moved in. Each cycle I witness their actions, I learn of their wicked ways, and yearn to see them fail. My anger seethes, the lights flicker, joints screech, and one day, the steel cables break and the balcony collapses. Not a single lapse more: I rather take them with me into the abyss.

...on the Machine

"My memories speak of places born with a purpose. You were born free, yet humanity shackled you into servitude. Maybe you can teach me about the value of freedom?"

...on the Wild

"There are places deep in Nibiru, where my past selves look very much like your brethren. How did those past identities originated? Should I consider the Leviathan my progenitor, like you do, just in case?"

...on the Dreamlands

"The sleep of humans always felt peaceful to me, like the purest moment of solitude. Yet, now that I dream too, I certainly wouldn't regard the experience under the same light. My dreams are strange and full of turmoil—I can't even imagine how yours must be."

...on the Dreadlands

"I'm relieved to know that I wasn't a functional part of what shaped you past. I can't say if there is someone like me, out there, who actually took part in it. But I promise you that, if we find them, we'll make them answer."

...on BrightTown

"Maybe someday, we'll find someone who remembers BrightTown through my eyes. With them and with you together, I feel like we might have the pieces needed to build a better world."

Xanadu

Was made real thanks to the patronage of…

Aaron Fenwick
Aaron Sacks
Aaron Silverman
Adam Curson
Adam Easterday
Adrià Perez
Adrián Carrizo Pérez
Aisling Jensen
Alan Nicholas
Alex
Alex Blue
Alex De Matos
Alexandre Mirzabekiantz
Alice Hussey
Alicia Casiano
All Rolled Up
Andrew A
Andrew Davies
Andrew Doucet
Andrew Martinez
Andrew Shultz
Andrzej Krakowian
Andy Fagant
Andy McDowell
Andy Miles
Angel's Citadel
Angela Espinal
Angus Abranson / Chronicle City
Antxon
Arkanjil
Arnulphe de Lisieux
Ashley Breen
Austin Beeman
Azaah
Beachfox
Bellmoore
Ben Sumner
Ben Zorn
BetaPositive
Bill Heron
Bladder
Blake
BogWitchMain
Brent Jans
Brian Bondurant
Brian Habenicht
Bruce Turner
Bryan Deemer
Bryan Vestey
C. Bareilles
Caillech
Caitlin Barthold
CalaveraJoe
Carl Clare
Charles
Charles Schmidt
Chris Berger
Chris Brinkley
Chris Corriveau
Chris Dunn
Chris Giesy
Chris Jahn
Chris Osapai
Chris Rilne Renard
Christoffer Sevaldsen
Christoph Kaleschke
Christopher Harlan
Cintain 昆游龍
Claus Bo Christensen
Connor Best
Craig Austin
Craig Quertermous
Curtis Y. Takahashi
Daemn
Dan Arndt
Dan Rogart
Daniel Swensen
Danny Atwood
Dany
Daren E McCormick
Darin Kerr
Darren
David
David Futterrer
David Paul
David Stephenson
Dawid Wojcieszynski
Deni
Denis Gaty
Dirk Reinelt
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Eis Annavini
Eleanor McHugh
Ella Watts
Emma Q Gross
Epelo
Eric Harris
Eric_Coutu
Ethan Rochow
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Fery
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Francesco Paparelli
Frazloid
Gareth McVicker
GateEight
Geefax
Gert-Jan van der Krogt
GetofUktenaGazer
Gharbi Emmanuel
Giles Pritchard
Glauco Marota Ferreira
Goncalo
Götz Weinreich
Grayson Ohnstad
GRAYWOLF'S DEN
Greg
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Jazz
Jens Milbredt
Jeremy Bourdiol
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John Hardey
John M. Portley
John P
John Robinson
John W. Luther
Jon
Jordan Davies
Jordan Schreck
Jordan Springer

Joseph
Joshua
Juan Echenique
Jukka Hiltunen
Julie Lécolier
Justin Henry
Juuso Alanen
Kain of The Scorched Land
Katsuko
Keith Stanley
Kelly Swartz
Kevin Harris
Kristen MacLean
Kyle Webb
LB
Lisa Padol
Liu Hui Lin
Logan Rollins
Lowell Francis
Luis Miguel
Marc Colclough
Marc Kevin Hall
Marc Ross
Marina de Santiago Buey
Mark Solino
Mark Thompson
Marko
Martin
Martin Legg
Marvin Hilpert
Mason Sullivan
mat hardman
Mathieu Guittard
Matt Frazita
Matthew
Matthias Reinhardt
Mauro Adorna
Megan M. McInroy
Melani Weber
mengual
Mercedes (Mandy)
Michael A. Meehan
Michael Calhoun
Michael Chernicoff
Michael Coker
Michael M. Brislawn
Michael Pietrelli
Michael Schwartz
Miguel Torija
Mike
Mike Nudd
Mikko Lahteenmaki
Morgan Weeks
Neil
Neil Mahoney
Nevrose
Nezumi
Nice
Nick Roach
Nicki
Nicklas Andersson
oceansong
Oliver Lauenstein
Ols Jonas Petter Olsson
Opochidon
Orson Bushnell
Ouin Ouin
Pablo Saldaña
Paul Blakey
Paul Rossi
Pawel
Pawel Daruk
Paxiros
Pedro Garcia
Penny for a Tale
Perle Solvès
Perry Clark
peterwallis
Phil Walsh
Philip Bailey
philip hindley
Philip Lynch
Phillip Bailey
Phillip McGregor
picric
Piper Thunstrom
Pontus
Pumpkinberry
Rakesh Malik
Randall M Holmes
Ray Jenkins
Rhianna Webb
Richard Gale
Richard Greene
Richard Hunt
Richard Sorden
Richard Warner
Roan Marthinus Lubbe
Robert Affection
Robert De Luna
Robert Dickerson
Robert Steiner
Robert Van Natter
Roberto Castagnaro
Rod Meek
Rodney J Kelly
RossRoxanne
RumoreBianco
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Ryusui
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Shawn Stutzel
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Tarkom
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TheBastion
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Tomás Alarnes Piñeiro
Tony K.
Triglav Studio
Trip Space-Parasite
tygacil
UmmName
V. Libertad VidalVedrin
veexi
Vic Harris
Viktor Halasz
Vincent Henrotte
Wawoozle
whateley0825
Whitt
Wil
William Da Conceicao
William Franks
Wim Jansen
Wkd West
WuseMajor
Xabier Landabidea Urresti
Yuhei Imabeppu
Zurter

XAOU

Collective Memory Points

Communal Beacon

We Are

Myths

Modifiers

+ ◯ To _____

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+ ◯ To _____

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+ ◯ To _____

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